



**Testimony in opposition of the Governor's Deficit Mitigation Plan before the
Appropriations Committee
March 11, 2010**

Good afternoon, Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Lucy Nolan and I am the executive director of End Hunger Connecticut!, a statewide advocacy and outreach organization concerned with hunger and food security. I am here today to speak out on Governor Rell's deficit mitigation plan.

Now is not the time to cut back further on human needs programs. Programs such as Nutrition Assistance and the Human Services Infrastructure (HSI) get food and other programs to people when they need it. And these programs work. Last December the Food Research and Action Council published a "food hardship" report that showed that 14.6% of Connecticut families were unable to afford food during 2009, and in families with children the percentage was even higher – 18.7% or almost one in five families. The only good news in these numbers is that our food hardship numbers decreased over those in 2008. The reason is that increased eligibility in SNAP and an increase in ARRA funds to the SNAP benefit, as well as increased commodities to food banks made the difference.

We know that these programs get food to people and in many cases SNAP benefits and food pantries are the only relief they have to the recession and their unprecedented need. Now, the Governor is proposing to cut two programs that get food to people at a time when they need it the most. The Nutrition Assistance line and the Human Services Infrastructure (HSI) are vehicles to feed people.

Nutrition Assistance funds the state's two food banks purchase of protein food for pantries. This is often food not donated and expensive. The food banks pay for administration of the programs, so this line item is for food. The Human Services Infrastructure is a partnership with the Department of Social Services on intake to increase participation in the myriad of human service programs that will help our friends and neighbors during a time of crisis. Additionally, HSI funds are used as a match for SNAP outreach for three organizations in Connecticut, including End Hunger Connecticut!

To cut these programs is literally taking food out of people's mouths – and they put money into the state's coffers. For every dollar comes to Connecticut it brings in \$1.83 in economic activity – that's almost a two for one exchange. The HSI line item is used by the state to match a federal grant for SNAP outreach with the USDA, funds that Connecticut may lose with the zeroing out of the program. Can we afford to lose that extra income? Given the current deficit and need, I would argue no. We should be doing all we can do to bring more SNAP benefits to people – not

cutting the vehicle that allows for increased SNAP outreach – outreach that increases DSS’s ability to get the benefit to people as we are able to prepare them for their application. In addition to these cuts, the Governor is proposing to sweep \$5 million from the Community Investment Act into the General Fund. When the CIA was implemented it was done so with specifics as to how the money can be spent. It’s about jobs, and more jobs. The CIA leverages federal, private and in-kind funds that will be lost if the sweep takes place. The CIA is vital to the agricultural life of Connecticut. Can we afford to lose our land, our way of life and our safe locally grown food?

It is our hope that the legislature and the Governor look at tax expenditures, at progressive tax rates, and creative solutions – not solely cuts that not only cost us in the future through poor health outcomes and quality of living but in lost federal funds as well. As a member of Better Choices for Connecticut we support their efforts to increase revenues.

Thank you very much.