



*A Member of America's Second Harvest  
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**Testimony before the Human Services Committee in favor of RB 5431**  
Connecticut General Assembly  
March 11, 2010

Presented by:  
Gloria J. McAdam, President and CEO, Foodshare

Good afternoon. My name is Gloria McAdam. I am the President at Foodshare, the regional food bank serving the greater Hartford area. I'm in my twenty-sixth year at Foodshare and I have never seen growth in the numbers of families needing help with basic necessities like food as has happened in this past year. Local food pantries report a 20% increase in the number of families coming in looking for help. Not a week goes by but that I hear about a new head of household in a line at a food pantry or the Mobile Foodshare truck who says something like, "I used to donate to this program, and I never thought I would be here needing help. But I need to feed my children, so here I am."

I welcome this opportunity to comment on RB 5431, specifically the section about the Commodities Assistance Program, how it supports the work of our local community food pantries, and how we could make the program work more effectively.

Hunger is a growing problem throughout Connecticut. There is now at least one private agency providing food to people in need in every town in the greater Hartford region, where Foodshare distributed over 12 million pounds of food last year. That food went out to 128,000 people, 50,000 of whom were children. While that is a lot of food by anyone's standards, it does average out to less than 100 pounds of food per person in need per year or just a couple of pounds a week. We clearly need to take advantage of every opportunity we have to do more and provide more and healthier food.

The Commodities Assistance Program is particularly important to the work to feed hungry families, as it provides a stable base of high nutrition foods, supplementing the donated foods that come from the food industry.

Foodshare supports the proposed change in the language of RB 5431 that would allow the food banks to collect a higher handling fee for this product. This program was created in 1988 and the handling fee was capped at five cents per pound at that time. Since then the costs of transportation and storage have risen significantly, forcing food banks to use other funding to underwrite the administrative costs of this program. An increase in the allowed handling fee would allow Foodshare to put these funds to better use providing more food through private efforts.

It's important to note that raising the cap does not automatically mean that Foodshare would charge the maximum handling fee. This is because Foodshare makes every effort to keep the costs low to the food pantries and community kitchens we serve through grants and other incentives. Raising the cap on the handling fee for this program would allow us to charge more if the circumstances made it necessary to do so.

Thank you.