END HUNGER CONNECTICUT!
Making Room at the Table

March 17, 2010
SB 1145: An Act Concerning Outreach by Community Action Agencies for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Applicants

Senator Musto, Representative Tercyak, and members of the Human Services Committee. My name is Lucy Nolan and I am the executive director of End Hunger Connecticut!, a statewide anti-hunger and food security organization. Our primary mission is to create long term sustainable solutions to hunger and as such do significant outreach on SNAP, formally known as food stamps. I would like to address the concerns of SB 1145, An Act Concerning Outreach by Community Action Agencies for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Applicants.

First I would like to address some misconceptions that I am hearing about the SNAP program in Connecticut. We are not last in the nation in participation. While we are among the last in the nation regarding timeliness and negative error rates **we are 23rd in the country in SNAP participation, and 9th in the nation in increases in participation.** The problem is not outreach; the problem is the logjam at DSS.

With caseloads of 1,750 per caseworker – in 2005 I was testifying that 1,000 were too many cases per worker – there are bound to be issues. Pair overburdened state employees with inadequate phone systems, 3.7 million pieces of paper a month, lack of modernization, our negative error rates, and timeliness issues are a foregone conclusion.

Secondly, there is a statewide SNAP outreach plan in which three groups, End Hunger Connecticut!, the Hispanic Health Council, and the Connecticut Association of Human Services serve the entire state in a comprehensive, systematic and creative approach in conjunction with the CAA's. We partner with other community-based groups like town agencies, faith-based groups and food pantries to broaden our reach. In addition, we act as a portal by DSS to alert clients and other community-based organizations as to changes to SNAP because of our extensive network.

Any community organization can do SNAP outreach, there is no need to legislate or designate one group over others. For example, EHC! partnered with AARP last fall for a very successful outreach campaign. AARP alerted their base to our integrated SNAP phone line, Foodshare volunteers came to our office and answered the phone and determined if the callers were eligible for SNAP. The three outreach organizations (EHC!, CAHS, and HHC) followed up with those who were eligible via visits to their homes or phone calls to ensure that the applications were complete.

In November and December, two months with holidays, we helped over 550 people get SNAP benefits from all over the state through our integrated phone system. Because of the front end work we did many of those we worked with received SNAP benefits within 30 days, the legal limit. We helped them determine if they were eligible, assisted with their applications, and in conjunction with AARP-CT followed up with a postcard to see if they received their benefit (attached). If not, we follow up with DSS. We are a cradle to grave operation.

End Hunger Connecticut!'s web-based SNAP calculator had over 10,000 hits last year, and our toll-free integrated SNAP information line received over 1,500 calls of which we sent out over 600 applications to people. These numbers are without advertising. Between the three community-based organizations and our partners, such as AARP-CT, Foodshare, MACC, Groton Family Services, TEEG and others we are doing some extraordinary outreach and preparing people for DSS. Our goal is to make it as easy for the caseworkers to do their jobs as best they can. SNAP is one of the most complicated federal benefits.

Legislating agencies to do outreach will not solve the state's problems. Connecticut's timeliness issues stem from workers holding onto expedited or emergency food stamps in order to do everything at one time, and the negative error rates stem from clients inadequate interview notice, inability to get through to their worker or lost paperwork. In order to get more people on SNAP, and to access federal dollars, modernization is the key along with more caseworkers, and upgrade phone systems and call centers. There is no need to change a very effective state outreach plan that is working. We are getting people to DSS, it's the infrastructure that is slowing everything down. For this reason, we are very appreciative of the Governor's attention to this need after years of neglect.

We are grateful that community-based organizations are included in the language on line 12 but urge the committee not designate one organization over all others, particularly as the work is being done by many in a cohesive and planned way, which is approved and supported by the Food and Nutrition Service of the USDA. For example, EHC! gave our SNAP web-based prescreener to CAFCA which they used as a model for the SNAP portion of their All Benefits Calculator. We all work together in the state to get as many people on SNAP as possible. Not only does the program bring much needed economic stimulus to the state it feeds people when they need it the most. Our outreach workers talk to people in need every day – our motivation is to get them on the program as quickly and efficiently as possible.

This bill is not the solution to error rates and lack of timeliness. The solution lies in supporting our state workers, and building creative solutions, like our e-Fax (see attached) and modernizing the department. DSS can opt for state waivers to ease the burden on the state, such as allowing the state contractors, which includes the CAA's, to use the screening and application assistance as interviews thereby freeing up time for eligibility workers and averting one of the main causes for error rates.

State workers must be given the tools to do this very important work, to do it well and in a timely manner – they are the only ones who can make determinations. Instead of this bill, I suggest requiring the Department to report to your committee and the Appropriations Committee by January 1, 2012 the progress they have made correcting the negative error rate, and timeliness issues for further review.

Thank you for your ongoing attention to increasing SNAP participation.

New Call Center

at
New Britain
Department of Social Services.

(860) 612-3545

All families who are receiving or have questions about HUSKY and SNAP benefits should call this number to find out about:

- **EBT card information (report lost or stolen cards)**
- **Report changes (such as income or address changes)**
- **Status of an application**
- **Redetermination information**

For more information call:
DSS Call Center at (860) 612-3545
or
End Hunger CT! at (860) 560-2100.

End Hunger CT! Inc. SNAP outreach project is funded through a grant by the Connecticut Department of Social Services, and the United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services.

102 Hungerford Street • Hartford, Connecticut 06106-4626 • phone: 860.560.2100 • fax: 860.560.2108
www.endhungerct.org • www.ctfoodstamps.org

Town of Groton
Human Services

Social Services
2 Fort Hill Road
Groton, CT 06340
Tel: (860) 441-6760
Fax: (860) 441-6766
humanser@town.groton.ct.us

Youth & Family Services
2 Fort Hill Road
Groton, CT 06340
Tel: (860) 441-6780
Fax: (860) 441-6766
yfs@town.groton.ct.us

Family Support Center
52 Litton Avenue
Groton, CT 06340
Tel: (860) 441-6790
Fax: (860) 449-7189
humanser@town.groton.ct.us

March 11, 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

The Town of Groton Department of Human Services has enjoyed a mutually beneficial relationship with End Hunger CT! for many years. In particular, the SNAP (Food Stamp) Outreach Program of EHC has benefitted hundreds of Groton residents on limited incomes.

On a regular basis, EHC schedules a SNAP Outreach worker at Groton Human Services. In addition to the Outreach Worker's regular monthly visits on the fourth Thursday of each month, EHC has allowed the Outreach Worker to be available as needed to meet with Groton residents who are in need of immediate assistance with SNAP applications. The Outreach Worker comes to Groton Human Services and meets directly with clients in a private office. When called upon to assist a Groton client, EHC's SNAP Outreach Program has never let us down.

The State Department of Social Services' Rx-Xpress Bus makes monthly trips to Groton, where it parks in the Groton Human Services parking lot from 10AM-2:30PM. Clients are able to apply for numerous State programs and/or obtain assistance with questions pertaining to existing benefit determinations. EHC's SNAP Outreach Worker is part of the team that provides services in conjunction with the DSS Rx-Xpress.

Groton Human Services and clients in need in the greater Groton area have come to rely on EHC's SNAP Outreach Program to provide guidance, application assistance and advocacy for SNAP recipients.

This department supports the fine work of EHC and its SNAP Outreach Program. We endorse the continuation of EHC's SNAP Outreach and look forward to maintaining our very successful collaborative relationship with End Hunger CT!.

Sincerely,

Marjorie D. Fondulas

Marjorie D. Fondulas
Director of Human Services

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

MICHAEL P. STARKOWSKI
Commissioner

TELEPHONE
(860) 424-5053

TDD/TTY
1-800-842-4524

FAX
(860) 424-5057

EMAIL
commis.dss@ct.gov

June 22, 2010

Lisa Johnson, Grant Officer
Food and Nutrition Service
Grants Management Division
3101 Park Center Drive, Room 738
Alexandria, VA 22302

Dear Ms. Johnson:

The Connecticut Department of Social Services (DSS) is fully committed to working with End Hunger Connecticut! (EHC!) on the e-Fax proposal as outlined in its application for the 2010 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation Grants.

End Hunger Connecticut! is one of three SNAP outreach contractors in Connecticut, and as such, EHC! and DSS work together on ways to increase access to SNAP. EHC! and DSS have successfully piloted e-Fax for over a year in our Hartford Regional Office and would like to see it expanded to all twelve of our regional offices.

With e-Fax, complete applications are sent with supporting documentation to a secure DSS e-mail site. The applications and supporting documentation are then referred to DSS staff for appropriate follow-up, resulting in quicker response times. E-Fax also provides the ability to easily locate all of the component parts of an application, thereby ensuring against loss of any materials and leading to greater client satisfaction. DSS will accept e-Fax applications from EHC! and our other SNAP outreach contractors, the Hispanic Health Council and the Connecticut Association for Human Services.

DSS has determined that the e-Fax approach is fully consistent with our Modernization of Client Service Delivery document management system, which is currently in the procurement stage and soon to begin development. E-Fax documents will be imported into the document management system client electronic case record and made available to eligibility staff for immediate processing through workflow software.

As proposed, DSS will commit any resources necessary to establish a working system and introduce it into their respective offices. The Department of Social Services will cooperate fully with the grant application and implementation of the e-Fax project and look forward to using the project to improve our state agency practices. If you would require further information, please do not hesitate to contact Marc Shok, SNAP Director, at (860) 424-5246.

Sincerely,

Michael P. Starkowski
Commissioner

MPS:ms

cc: Claudette Beaulieu, Deputy Commissioner
Lucy Nolan, End Hunger Connecticut!
Kevin Loveland
Marc Shok

Thank you for talking to me on _____ (insert date). I am returning this postcard to let you know about my progress with **SNAP enrollment**.

Please check all that apply.

I have:

- ☐ Mailed in my application form to the Department of Social Services.
- ☐ Completed my interview with the Department of Social Services.
- ☒ Received my EBT card. The value of my SNAP benefits will be: 217.00 month
- ☐ Not heard from the Department of Social Services.
- ☐ Received a letter that my application was denied.

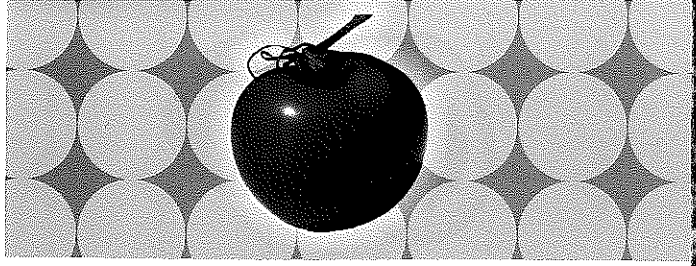
I am sending this card back so that I can receive the **free gift** that was offered through the **End Hunger CT!/AARP Foundation project.**

Code: 222

AARP FOUNDATION

EHC! END HUNGER CONNECTICUT! Making Room at the Table

End Hunger Connecticut!
102 Hungerford Street
Hartford, CT 06106



Monthly Gross* Income Guidelines

Household Size	Income
1	$1670
2	$2246
3	$2823
4	$3399
5	$3976
6	$4553
7	$5129
8	$5706
Additional	+576

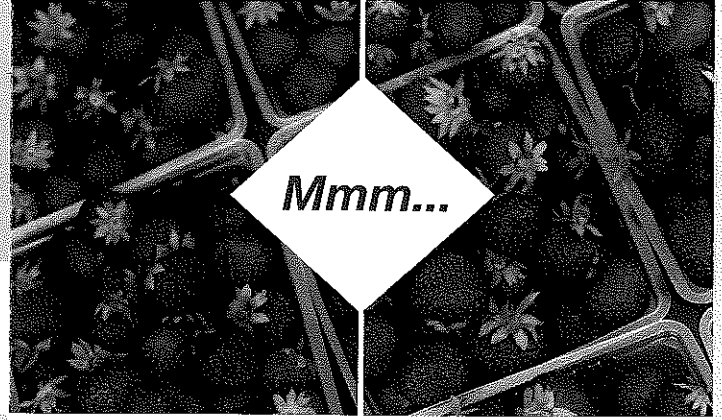
* Income before taxes and other deductions are taken out

** A household in the SNAP Program is a group of people that live together and buy and prepare meals together

HEY, DID YOU KNOW?...

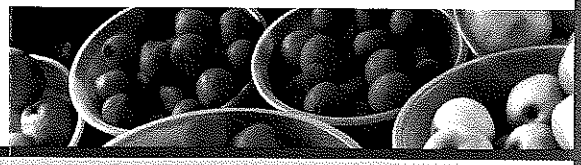
- You no longer have to verify assets (such as your bank accounts) as long as your income is under the income guidelines.

End Hunger CT! Inc. SNAP outreach project is funded through a grant by the Connecticut Department of Social Services, and the United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services.



NEED FOOD? IT'S A SNAP

We Can Help You



Our Outreach Workers are here for you:

Hartford/Tolland County
Suzette Strickland: (860) 560-2100 ext.305

Hartford/New Britain
Yaira Arroyo: (860) 560-2100 ext.306

Windham County
Carl Asikainen: (860) 874-5349

New London County
Kira Watson: (860) 449-2053

End Hunger Connecticut! Inc.
102 Hungerford Street
Hartford, CT 06106
Phone: (860) 560-2100
Fax: (860) 560-2108
www.endhungerct.org
www.ctfoodstamps.org

Food Stamps are now called SNAP

(Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)

Same Program New Name

EHC!™
END HUNGER CONNECTICUT!
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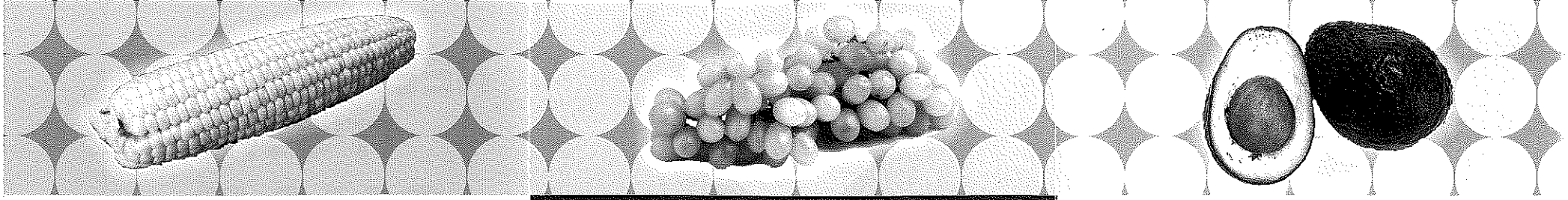
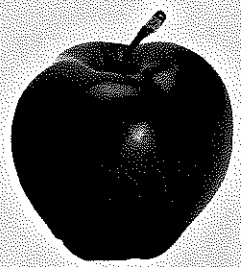


Who's Eligible?

LEGAL IMMIGRANTS...

- If you have a permanent resident card you may be eligible for SNAP Benefits.
- If you have lived in Connecticut for 6 months or more you may be eligible for state funded SNAP Benefits.
- If you are not a citizen, and you have children that are under the age of 18 born in the United States, they may be eligible for SNAP Benefits.



To see if you are eligible for SNAP, call our toll-free number at

1 (866) 974-SNAP

or visit our website to try our online SNAP calculator at

www.ctfoodstamps.org

What You Should Bring When Applying for Food Stamps...

- Photo I.D.
- Social Security numbers for all household members applying
- Proof of where you live
- Proof of earned income (requires all paystubs for the previous month)
- Proof of all other income (such as court ordered child support) or SSI Budget Sheet
- Proof of expenses:

  Rent Reciept/Mortgage Coupon

  Utility Bills
  (even if they are not in your name)

  Childcare/Dependent Care Costs

  Child Support Payments

If you are 60 years or older, or disabled you also need to bring:

- Proof of medical expenses you pay out of your own pocket

If you are elderly or disabled, working or have trouble getting to the Department of Social Services office, you may request an over the phone interview.

IF YOU LIVE HERE	GO HERE
Avon, Bloomfield, Canton, East Granby, Farmington, Granby, Hartford, Newington, Rocky Hill, Simsbury, Suffield, West Hartford, Wethersfield, Windsor, Windsor Locks	Dept. of Social Services Hartford Office 3580 Main Street Hartford, CT 06120 (860) 723-1000
Andover, Bolton, East Hartford, East Windsor, Ellington, Enfield, Glastonbury, Hebron, Manchester, Marlborough, Somers, South Windsor, Stafford, Tolland, Vernon	Dept. of Social Services Manchester Office 699 East Middle Tpke Manchester, CT 06040 (860) 647-1441
Ashford, Brooklyn, Canterbury, Chaplin, Columbia, Coventry, Eastford, Hampton, Killingly, Mansfield, Plainfield, Pomfret, Putnam, Scotland, Sterling, Thompson, Union, Willington, Windham, Woostock	Dept. of Social Services Willimantic Office 676 Main Street Willimantic, CT 06226 (860) 465-3500
Bozrah, Colchester, East Lyme, Franklin, Griswold, Groton, Lebanon, Ledyard, Lisbon, Montville, New London, Norwich, North Stonington, Preston, Salem, Sprague, Stonington, Voluntown, Waterford	Dept. of Social Services Norwich Office 401 West Thames Street Unit 102 Norwich, CT 06360 (860) 823-5000
Berlin, Bristol, Burlington, New Britain, Plainville, Plymouth, Southington	Dept. of Social Services New Britain Office 30 Christian Lane New Britain, CT 06051 (860) 612-3400