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450 Woodland Ave, Bloomfield, CT 06002-1342  
Phone (860) 286-9999 / Fax (860) 286-7860

**Testimony before the Human Services Committee**  
Connecticut General Assembly  
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Presented by:  
Gloria J. McAdam  
President and CEO, Foodshare

My name is Gloria McAdam and I am the President and CEO at Foodshare. Foodshare is the heart of greater Hartford's fight against hunger. Serving as the region's food bank, Foodshare works to distribute food each day to a network of nearly 300 local partners to help feed our hungry neighbors. Through these programs, Foodshare served 128,000 people, including 50,000 children, last year. I am here to speak in response to SB 1145, AN ACT CONCERNING OUTREACH BY COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCIES FOR SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM APPLICANTS. Foodshare believes this bill is duplicative and unnecessary. Currently Foodshare, in partnership with End Hunger CT! and a number of other private, non-profit organizations works on increasing SNAP participation rates through direct outreach at the community level. We screen people to see if they are likely eligible for benefits, and if they are eligible, we help them complete the applications.

Foodshare works to end hunger in greater Hartford and we realize that we cannot do this by ourselves. In fact, our analysis suggests that 61% of the food received by low income people in Connecticut comes from the SNAP program, 32% comes from other federal programs, and only 7% is provided by private charities like Foodshare. Because the scope of what SNAP can, and does, do for our low-income neighbors is so great, just a 5% increase in people participating in SNAP would result in more food for people than the 12 million pounds of food that Foodshare distributes each year. It clearly would be cheaper and make more sense to add 5% more people to the SNAP program than to expect food banks to double in size.

With approximately 30% of the people who are likely eligible for the SNAP benefit not yet receiving the benefit, community outreach, like that already being done by Foodshare and

End Hunger CT! is important. However, more outreach will not help at all if we do not fix the problems at the Department of Social Services.

Deputy Commissioner Claudette Beaulieu was recently quoted as reporting that the Connecticut DSS currently has each case worker "handling an average of 1,750 cases each month." This far exceeds a manageable case load per worker.

In part due to these high caseloads, Connecticut has the second to worst quality rating in the country. The USDA reports that fewer than 60 percent of applications in Connecticut are being processed within the federally mandated 30 days. When Foodshare follows-up, we often see applications take up to twice the mandated time. The current system at the Department of Social Services is so broken that the state is in danger of being fined up to a million dollars.

At the same time, families in need are suffering. They are forced into a system that does not work. Foodshare's Outreach Coordinator receives daily calls from residents who have applied for SNAP with a complete application and full verification. They wait patiently, trying to make ends meet from local pantries and Mobile Foodshare, and they hear nothing about their application.

We also receive calls from residents who have been approved, but have a question about the program that they cannot get answered. In one case an elderly woman was approved for SNAP and was mailed her EBT card. She called in tears because she had received her card over a month ago but was confused on how to access the benefits that were on it. She had tried contacting DSS but could not get through. She was hungry and had the benefits right at her finger tips but was not able to access them.

The critical issue is that DSS have the staff and resources so that SNAP applications are processed in a timely and accurate manner. Once the problems at DSS are fixed, let's talk about more community based outreach. Until then, this bill is unnecessary.