

## TESTIMONY OF ISABEL KING

### S.B. No. 1145 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING OUTREACH BY COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCIES FOR SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM APPLICANTS

MARCH 16, 2011

My name is Isabel King. I am an Eligibility Services Supervisor in the Department of Social Services Danbury Office, employed for a total of 21 years.

This proposed act is well-intentioned but misguided.

For several years, the dedicated, hard working employees of the Department of Social Services have been begging for the tools and the staff and the policies and procedures that would enable us complete our work in an accurate timely manner. Year after year, as applications and caseload levels have increased, staff numbers have decreased, complex policy and procedure are communicated through email, making reference extremely difficult, while our computer system has grown more and more antiquated.

Year after year we have been asked to do more and more with less and less. In the last two years our caseloads have increased by 65%. Now, we have reached our saturation point. The result is an embarrassingly high SNAP error rate and a shameful SNAP negative error rate. This is not a total surprise since we have been struggling for so long to do the job under such difficult circumstances. Yet, rather than give us the staff and tools we have begged for, you propose that we have farm the work out to the CAP agencies.

What DSS staff and our customers do not need is yet another level of agencies and organizations adding another step to the application process that otherwise could be completed quickly and efficiently by a well staffed DSS. Our customers certainly do not need even more people involved in their personal business. At DSS we are bound by confidentiality. The more people, agencies and organizations involved in the process the less the guarantee of confidentiality.

The screening/interview process is an integral part of the eligibility process. It is during that process that the qualified, experienced eligibility worker asks the appropriate questions in a manner that elicits information necessary to request required verifications and to make the correct eligibility determination. Given the right level of staffing, the process can be completed in accurate and timely manner by the DSS Eligibility Workers.

Carving this portion of our process out and giving it to that CAP agencies to review and submit to DSS to review and process is redundant and only serves to add more paper to the piles of work that DSS staff at the current levels are already struggling to complete.

Those of us who work at DSS didn't get in this business to get rich. We got in to help people, in this case people in need, people who could fall through the safety net.

Connecticut is still feeling the effects of an economic crisis. Times like this demand more of an investment in vital public services, not less.

Please work with us to ensure we have proper staffing at the Department of Social Services to meet the growing needs of our clients in tough times.

Thank you very much.