

Testimony by Martin Booker

SB 1145, AN ACT CONCERNING OUTREACH BY COMMUNITY ACTION  
AGENCIES FOR SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM  
APPLICANTS

March 17, 2011

Good morning distinguished members of the Human Services Committee, my name is Martin Booker and I am a student at the University of Connecticut, and a local Hartford resident. Thank you for taking the time to allow me to speak to you about Senate Bill 1145, concerning outreach for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

Outreach by community based organizations will allow the food stamp screening process to become more efficient; however these services are currently being performed by Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS), End Hunger CT! and the Hispanic Health Council. The added benefit of conducting the face to face interview at a community based agency will take the pressure off of regional Department of Social Services offices and will allow more eligible families to be screened faster. By allowing current outreach partners and community based organizations to conduct the face to face interview more families will receive the benefits that are needed. But going forward with this bill could cause too many agencies to be involved which could complicate the process.

CAHS has implemented the Earn Benefits Online (EBO) tool which allows individuals to be screened for SNAP along with nine other benefits. The tool is being used by 15 community partners in over six Connecticut cities. Since this tool was implemented in February 2010, over 1,500 households have been screened for benefits.

This is an example of the effectiveness of the current process, which is still being carried out by CAHS and the other two agencies involved.

Senate Bill 1145 may be effective in its mission to expedite the receipt of benefits by participants; however it is essential that the Bill does not allow community based organizations to verify program eligibility. By federal law, verification of benefit eligibility can only be done by the State Department of Social Services.

Connecticut's residents are in great need of the support offered through the SNAP program, I believe that an amended Senate Bill 1145 will expedite the screening process that is necessary for application for benefits and result in greater access to the program, but will only become a duplication of services already being provided. Thank you for your time.