

Testimony re: GA No. 1145

*AN ACT CONCERNING OUTREACH BY COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCIES FOR
SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM APPLICANTS.*

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My name is Michael Rion and I am a SNAP volunteer with Foodshare. I regularly assist people in determining their eligibility for SNAP and helping them complete the necessary forms which Foodshare then submits to DSS.

Certainly there is a need to increase SNAP participation rates, as our experience at Foodshare demonstrates. In fact, Foodshare devotes a full time position to training volunteers to do applications, deploying us to various community centers and events, and submitting applications to DSS.

I urge you not to assume that this bill addresses the most important challenge to getting more eligible people onto SNAP. That obstacle lies within DSS where well intentioned but overworked staff and old technologies slow down the process. Some examples from my experience:

- We often have to advise people to call their worker about a particular question or concern; good people trying their best to manage their way through the system roll their eyes when we tell them this. In their experience, too often the voice mail box of the worker is full or the worker does not call them back or their worker has changed and the paperwork is lost. This is not an abstract problem, I have witnessed this first hand.
- The applications that we use are out dated in some of their details, sometimes confusing in the questions asked, and most important, they are paper applications only. We go through enormous amounts of paper completing applications and copying relevant documents and then faxing them. That slows the process down for people who often need assistance yesterday. An online application process and the ability of DSS to verify certain information using Social Security and case numbers would dramatically improve efficiency.