



DEPARTMENT OF ELDERLY SERVICES
Community Services Administration
City of New Haven
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John DeStefano, Jr.
Mayor

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Director

**Testimony of the City of New Haven
Before the Aging Committee**

In Support of
SB 522 - AN ACT INCREASING FUNDING FOR ELDERLY NUTRITION

Submitted by
Patricia Wallace, Elderly Service Director
February 4, 2013

Senator Ayala, Representative Serra, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of an increase in supplemental funds for the Elderly Nutrition Program. This program was cut two years ago, and has been significantly restored, but it can't be promoted or expanded because of funding constraints. In our region, you can't have a cup of coffee or tea with your lunch. The program can't afford it. While from a nutrition stand point that is not important, in terms of what is normal for this age group, it feels bad. It sends the message, you don't rate a cup of coffee. The Nutrition Program is doing what it can to stretch a dollar. Seniors contribute what they can to support the program. In New Haven senior centers the average donation ranges from \$.71 per person to \$1.87.

The Elderly Nutrition Program is of unique importance. It can provide home-delivered meals to the homebound. This helps to reduce over-use of nursing home care. The congregate, or café program, takes place in senior centers and senior housing complexes. It gives people a reason to get up and out, and the chance to socialize as well as have a delicious, nutritious meal. That is important because it helps to prevent social isolation and depression. The number of meals served in the Congregate Program varies from 2,700 to 3,700 per month. More than 45,000 meals were delivered to homebound seniors.

In the spring of 2012, a master's candidate in public health at Southern Connecticut State University conducted a study of randomly selected older adults who participate in the Rent Rebate Program in the City of New Haven in order to learn about how they obtained their food, and about obstacles they faced. The Rent Rebate Program is a State Program to assist low-income renters

- 41% said it was hard to be able to have enough in your food budget to be able to buy food you need to eat in a healthy way.
- 76% make use of food pantries when needed.

Please do what you can to increase the funds for this program. I would be happy to provide additional information.

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