



State of Connecticut
HOUSE REPUBLICAN OFFICE
STATE CAPITOL
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Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 277
Human Services Committee
March 3, 2016

Chairs Abercrombie and Moore, Ranking Members Wood and Markley, and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony in support of **Senate Bill 277: An Act Requiring Able-Bodied Adults without Dependents to Meet Work Requirements to Receive Benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program**

Whether you are Republican or Democrat, we share the belief that the primary functions of any welfare program is to provide poor individuals and families with temporary services and benefits to help them gain financial independence and self-success. In 1996 Congress passed the historic welfare reform act which put in place work requirements for TANF and SNAP recipients to discourage long-term government dependency.

One of the work requirements is for able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWD) to participate in 20 hours' worth of work activities in order to maintain their SNAP eligibility. If the individual is unable to fulfill that requirement, they receive benefits for 3 months in a 3 year period. If they participate in work activities, they continue to receive benefits beyond the three month period. We believe this policy is reasonable in order to incentivize individuals to seek employment and supplement their benefits with earned income and help lift them towards self-reliance.

However, for several years, the Department of Social Services has waived the SNAP work requirement for able-bodied adults without dependents for the entire state under the argument that jobs were scarce. This has allowed the ABAWD population to receive benefits for an unlimited time-frame without having to document work participation. The state-wide waiver had expired last year, but in the beginning of this year, the Department was approved to waive the ABAWD population in 82 municipalities from the work requirements. In

addition, the Department may exercise the option to apply a 15 percent exemption for the remainder of the unemployed ABAWD population not covered by the limited waiver. Each 15 percent exemption extends eligibility for an ABAWD beneficiary for 1 additional month.

16 States are operating their SNAP programs without waiving the work requirements. We strongly urge the committee to require of DSS to adhere to these work requirements. According to Governor Malloy, unemployment is at its lowest since 2008. Yet participation in the SNAP program is the highest it's ever been. It's time to reinforce the American value of self-reliance. Finding and holding jobs may not be easy, but with perseverance they are attainable. The state must adopt a policy that reinforces work values, not suspend them. We urge the committee to support the bill.

Thank you.