



Testimony on Senate Bill 277

Submitted by Suzanne Bates, Policy Director

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Good afternoon. My name is Suzanne Bates. I am the policy director for the Yankee Institute for Public Policy, a Connecticut-based free market think tank.

I am here to express our support for Senate Bill 277.

Work is ennobling. It doesn't just provide an income, it also provides a person with stability, a sense of accomplishment and a sense of self-worth.

Research shows that requiring recipients of state or federal assistance to work can help lift them out of poverty.

In a recent report issued by a joint team of scholars from the Brookings Institution and American Enterprise Institute – a rare combination of opinions from the left and right – the authors said: “Americans have always broadly agreed that as many people as possible should be able to support themselves and their children. Public policies should aim to reduce poverty while also reducing dependency on the government and increasing people’s ability to earn their own way and take responsibility for their own futures.”¹

Requiring able-bodied recipients of state and federal aid to work at least 20 hours a week is a sensible policy. Connecticut’s unemployment rate now stands at 5.2 percent, which is low enough that the state should ask all individuals who receive assistance through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to work at least 20 hours a week in order to receive this assistance.

These work requirements were suspended during the Great Recession, and have now been reestablished in most states – including New York, New Jersey and Massachusetts.

¹ Opportunity, Responsibility, and Security: A Consensus Plan for Reducing Poverty and Restoring the American Dream. AEI/Brookings Working Group on Poverty and Opportunity. 2015. <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/reports/2015/12/aei-brookings-poverty-report/full-report.pdf>

Food stamp enrollment in the United States has increased significantly since the recession among able-bodied adults, while at the same time the workforce participation rate dropped – also significantly.

Getting able-bodied adults back to work will be good for Connecticut's economy and also good for the individuals themselves.

Thank you.