

January 5, 2012

The Honorable Tom Corbett  
Governor, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
225 Main Capitol Building  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

Dear Governor Corbett:

We urge you to suspend efforts to implement an asset test for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which were announced by Department of Public Welfare Executive Deputy Secretary Tim Costa at a legislative hearing on October 26.

In a time of high unemployment and limited job opportunities, many Pennsylvanians are experiencing hunger and struggling to put food on the table. These families come through the doors of our agencies every day. They are hard-working parents who recently lost their jobs, seniors whose fixed incomes don't stretch as far as they once did, and struggling workers who, in this difficult economy, have taken part-time or low-wage jobs that don't even cover the necessities. Fortunately, we and our partners can refer these families, including some with modest assets, to SNAP to help them get back on their feet.

As organizations that provide and fund social services, we are concerned that an asset test for SNAP would harm the families we serve and slow Pennsylvania's economic recovery. Last year, the Commonwealth received more than \$2.3 billion in federally funded SNAP benefits, which were immediately spent on groceries at supermarkets and small businesses across Pennsylvania. Reinstating the asset test could disqualify tens of thousands of Pennsylvanians from SNAP—many of whom would be seniors and families of the newly unemployed—and result in a direct loss of tens of millions in federal SNAP dollars every year. The fallout from that loss would extend far beyond Pennsylvania's retail, agricultural and food production industries. For every \$1 of SNAP benefits spent, \$1.73 of economic activity is generated in Pennsylvania across multiple industries.

An asset test would not only deprive Pennsylvania of critical federal SNAP dollars and the additional spending they generate, it would subject the state to higher administrative costs as well. The proposal would require more than 850,000 households to verify their assets, and the additional paperwork would place an unnecessary burden on County Assistance Office caseworkers, whose caseloads have nearly doubled in the past nine years. Increased error rates among overburdened caseworkers could lead to multimillion-dollar penalties if the federal government finds that Pennsylvania is failing to administer the program properly.

We urge you to immediately suspend efforts to implement this harmful asset test for SNAP. With Pennsylvania still reeling from the recession—and the possibility of a double-dip recession looming—it is imperative that we preserve federal support programs like SNAP that help families and communities weather these tough economic times. The Commonwealth should continue to draw down these federal dollars to promote the health of its residents *and* its economy.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

AARP Pennsylvania

ACHIEVA

ACTION Housing, Inc.

Adagio Health

Advocacy Committee for Justice and Peace  
of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia

Allegheny Valley Association of Churches

Benefits Data Trust

Brashear Association, Inc.

Camp Allegheny

Catholic Community of Bloomfield Food  
Pantry

Center for Advocacy for the Rights and  
Interests of the Elderly (CARIE)

Central Moravian Food Bank

Central Pennsylvania Food Bank

City Soup Philadelphia, Interfaith Hunger  
Relief

Christian Associates of Southwest  
Pennsylvania

Church in the Round

Coalition for Low Income Pennsylvanians

Commission on Economic Opportunity

Community Action Association of  
Pennsylvania

Community Food Warehouse of Mercer  
County

Community Justice Project

Community Legal Services

Council of Three Rivers American Indian  
Center

Essential Energy

Evangelicals for Social Action

Every Child, Inc.

Family Connection of Easton

Feast of Justice Ministries

Federation Housing

Germantown Jewish Centre

Graymatters Consulting

Greater Berks Food Bank

Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against  
Hunger

Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank

HIAS Pennsylvania

Human Services Center/Mon Valley  
Providers Council

Hunger-Free Pennsylvania

Interplay Child Care Center

Jacob's Dream

JEVS Human Services

Jewish Association on Aging

Jewish Family and Children's Service of  
Pittsburgh

Jewish Family and Children's Service of  
Philadelphia

Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia

Jewish Relief Agency  
Jewish Social Policy Action Network  
Just Harvest  
Klein Jewish Community Center  
Lincoln Park Community Center  
Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania  
Lutheran Settlement House  
Maternity Care Coalition  
Metropolitan Community Church of Pittsburgh Food Bank  
Michael's Place  
Montgomery County Community Action Development Commission  
National Council on Jewish Women Pennsylvania State Policy Advocacy  
Pathways PA  
Peer Support and Advocacy Network  
Penn's Village  
Pennsylvania Head Start Association  
Pennsylvania Hunger Action Center  
Pennsylvania Jewish Coalition  
Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children  
Pentecostals & Charismatics for Peace & Justice  
People In Need of Lawrence County  
Petra International Ministries Food Bank  
Pittsburgh Council on Higher Education  
Presbyterian Church (USA)  
Project SHARE of Carlisle  
Providence Connections

Public Citizens for Children and Youth  
Rainbow Kitchen Community Services  
SEAMAAC  
Second Harvest Food Bank of the Lehigh Valley and Northeast Pennsylvania  
Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest Pennsylvania  
Service Employees International Union 668  
SeniorLAW Center  
Shenango Presbyterian SeniorCare  
Smithfield United Church of Christ  
Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Altoona-Johnstown Diocese  
South Hills Interfaith Ministries  
Southwestern Pennsylvania Food Security Partnership  
St. Michael's Food Bank  
St. Stephen's Lutheran Church  
The Food Trust  
The Somerset Tapestry of Health  
United Neighborhood Centers of Northeastern Pennsylvania  
United Way of Beaver County  
United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania  
UPMC Health Plan  
Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh  
Witnesses to Hunger  
Women's Law Project