



Senate of Pennsylvania

Senator Anthony H. Williams

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DATE: January 12, 2012

TO: All Senators

FROM: Senator Anthony H. Williams

SUBJECT: Co-sponsorship of Legislation: **Prohibit the Asset Test for the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program**

In the near future, I will be introducing legislation to amend the Public Welfare Code, 62 P.S. §403.1, to prohibit the development of regulations that would penalize individuals who participate in the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (“SNAP”).

Recently, the Department of Public Welfare submitted a request to the Food and Nutrition Service to reinstate the asset test for SNAP. Currently, Pennsylvanians can access SNAP if they make 160 percent of the federal poverty level or less. The poverty level is \$22,350 for a family of four. This proposed policy change would make the amount of food stamps individuals receive subject to the value of their assets. More specifically, the proposed asset test stipulates that individuals under 60 years of age who have more than \$2,000 in savings and assets will not be eligible to receive food stamps. In addition, those over 60 who possess \$3,250 in savings and other assets will be unable to receive food stamps. The proposal would take effect May 1, 2012.

The Commonwealth previously utilized an asset test, but it was removed in 2008 due to its harmful effects on the elderly as well as poverty-stricken citizens. Many critics of the plan note that it would particularly punish senior citizens saving for their burials, as well as working- and middle-class people who lost their jobs in the recession and may now have to liquidate assets to feed their families. Several national and state-based organizations have already spoken out against the Department’s proposal. My legislation would prevent regulations which penalize an individual’s savings and assets when participating in public assistance programs.

If you wish to co-sponsor this legislation, please contact Shannon A. Sargent, Esq., at 787-5970 or email ssargent@pasenate.com.