

Good morning. My name is Bill Jamison. I am the director of the Allison Hill Community Ministry, here in Harrisburg on South Allison Hill. South Allison Hill is often referred to as Harrisburg's pocket of poverty; although I'm certain that poverty is not so geographically limited these days. One of our ministry's is a food pantry. Obviously, the Allison Hill Community Ministry is a faith based agency. In that light, I gave some reflection that in these chambers there often rises a loud voice, this year indicated by action, that this commonwealth is grounded in the Christian Bible. In that context, I call your attention to the admonishment given us through the Sermon on the Mound that we should feed the hungry.

Three years ago our food pantry was providing supplemental food assistance to some 60 families each month. This year that number has risen to 135-140 families each and every month. Our emergency food program...and understand that emergency means there is no food in the home...the kids will not have breakfast...in our emergency program we used to deal with maybe 4 emergencies over a month. Now we do 8-10. Our food emergencies come from communities other than South Allison Hill...actually, they call from places as far away as Enola and Mechanicsburg, places where hunger still remains a hidden issue.

The notion of the asset test is to feed as few people as we can...not to deal with the issue of hunger as it is in reality. Secretary Alexander stated, "The asset test ensures every public dollar goes directly to those who need it most...an important reform that ensures individuals use the personal resources available to them..." Yes, exactly. We are proposing that as a commonwealth, we assure that families and individuals are absolutely reduced to humble folks with nothing before we will address their hunger issues. We call that concern about the welfare of our citizens.

Listed in the assets are the home, the car...the shelter your family needs...absolutely needs, and the car, if you are ever to find work again. Assets?...these are necessities in today's world. The education fund should absolutely be the last thing we would ever ever consider...unless it is our intention to insure generational poverty. Pension Funds? After we have contributed and worked and achieved an older age, what exactly else are you asking?...if we need food stamps... The stories are cruel when you think of some of the choices our older citizens are forced to make today much less in the tomorrow you would propose.

Most of the people coming to our food pantry are from working families. Many of the people who come to our food pantry are the recently unemployed. Often there is a SNAP representative who sets up a table and explains to our hungry the qualifications to access the food stamp program. Currently, some of our families are able to obtain something akin to food security...here living in America, the richest country there ever was. This Asset Test is an instrument that will disqualify most until they have absolutely nothing...nothing but hard times in this commonwealth where the intention would most obviously be that wealth would be



anything but common. And the admonishment of feed the hungry!..in this year of the Bible or not...is not being heard. The idea being to feed them all.

