

**Jewish Family & Children's Service of Pittsburgh
Squirrel Hill Community Food Pantry
SNAP Asset Test Testimony for March 15, 2012**

Dear Members of the House of Representatives' Human Services Committee:

Bringing back the Asset Test to the SNAP program will hurt families and seniors who are working to better their lives and to get ahead. The ability to access nutritious foods through SNAP and then being able to divert some of the money that they would have spent on food can help to bring them to a more stable life situation is a key to achieving self-sufficiency. A low cap on the amount of saving a family or senior adult can have may put them at risk for losing their home if there is a medical or financial crisis. Being able to save to get into a better housing situation, such as buying versus renting, or having the funds in savings to make a major home repair are important to families who are struggling to get by each week and that one crisis will cause them to lose everything.

Please strongly consider your constituents who need SNAP benefits while they work on saving for their future and no longer need to use this vital resource when you vote on the SNAP Asset Test. Please keep levels at a high enough level to allow families and seniors to climb out of poverty and make a better life for them.

Jewish Family & Children's Service of Pittsburgh (JF&CS) has been helping the most vulnerable members of our community for the past 75 years. We have focused on helping people who are hungry and in need of supplemental food since 1998 through the efforts of our program, the Squirrel Hill Community Food Pantry.

JF&CS of Pittsburgh joined in the fight against hunger 13 years ago because there was need in the Jewish community for low-income people to receive kosher food from a food pantry. Now the Squirrel Hill Community Food Pantry provides both kosher and non kosher food to all eligible clients in our neighborhood, serving over 1,250 unique clients in 600 households in just one zip code for the City of Pittsburgh. Over the past five years this represents a 171% increase in numbers of people in just one zip code turning to the Squirrel Hill Community Food Pantry during these difficult economic times.

SNAP benefits are received by 55% of the households (330 families) served at the Food Pantry. Almost 40% (240 households) of those receiving SNAP benefits are senior adults. The additional support the seniors receive from SNAP help them to have more food while not worrying if they can pay their medication co-pays or their utility bills while still having enough

money to buy healthy food. Without the monthly support of the Squirrel Hill Community Food Pantry and SNAP benefits these families would not be able to maintain a healthy diet, just exposing them to illness, resulting in potentially higher costs to for government and community organizations.

Respectfully submitted,

Aryeh Sherman, LCSW
President and CEO
Jewish Family & Children's Service of Pittsburgh

and

Rebecca Abrams, MSW
Director
Squirrel Hill Community Food Pantry and SOS Pittsburgh