



**National Commission on Hunger Public Hearing  
Public Testimony**

June 15, 2015 ♦ 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.  
Alameda County Board of Supervisors  
1221 Oak Street, 5th Floor Board Chambers  
Oakland, CA 94612

**PUBLIC TESTIMONY PARTICIPANT #1**

**Commissioner: Jonetta Hall, please. Good afternoon.**

Participant #1: Good afternoon.

**Commissioner: Good afternoon.**

Participant #1: [inaudible] Commissioner. My name is Jonetta Hall. I have one child. I'm recently homeless. We recently were on the program where you're, where you can go out and use your Food Stamps for just to go out and eat if you need to just go out and eat and to get something a little healthy. I currently stay in a place I, I wish could be better for me and my daughter. I know I've been to the Witnesses to Hunger and I know, I know over there, I experience, what I experienced over there and knowing like I say, yeah, it, it happens all over, that really made me believe it happens everywhere and right now our, our Food Stamps, we just struggle with just, you know, I know for me, it's like, I want to eat healthy but the Food Stamps, it's like, you know, you only get them once a month, it only helps you to get so, get so far and then we're still needing some stuff by the end of the month and so I know when I go shopping, I try to get like, you know, the chicken and, and stuff like that. I would love to get the more healthier stuff, like the vegetables and the fruit and the salad and stuff but it's so expensive and it takes a lot of the, the money because, you know, it's, everything's per pound and you can only get so much, you know, per pound and, and it's expensive. I know for my daughter, she, she loves her vegetables. I, you know, I try to get her all the vegetables she likes and her fruit that she likes and I'm, I'm very grateful for the Food Stamps. I have been on, on aid for quite a while and, and actually, I was supposed to be kicked off but due to the, I applied for SSI, they gave me a little more time and pending SSI, I was able to stay on with my daughter but they say I will be getting kicked off in August, so it'll be, we won't get as much and the Food Stamps will go down because I won't be on there anymore.

So but I just, I just see that as, you know, it's, it's hard, you know, for a single mother, who, who don't get any help but not rely on the state but just rely on the help, the only help they have and that's my only help and without other family members, you know. We came from San, Sacramento and, and traveled here today and I just want everyone to see my situation



because, you know, I, I've seen other people's situation but for my situation, it's different, you know. It's hard, it's been hard, you know, just struggling, been working, walking around and just trying to find work every day or, you know, applying for applications because everything's online and if they reply to you and say, 'No, we don't need you right now,' or, or if they send you a letter and they say that they don't need you right now and it's just, that, that makes it frustrating because it's like, "Okay, why are they not doing this?"

I don't want to, you know, I don't want to like stay on welfare, like they're, they have you put in a corner and so say and they want to like all the programs that are there to help you, I'm even on the, the program they have for stabilization, homeless stabilization again and someone else got help but the lady I have is not, she, I have to like beg her for bus passes because, you know, they're \$6.00 a piece, \$6.00 for me to get on and \$3.00 for my daughter to get on, so if it's after, well, school is out now but, you know, I have to pay \$3.00 for her to get on the bus with me to just go look for places and I'm just like, you know, this is kind of crazy, going around and catching all these busses and just, you know, and so she finally did and, you know, talked to her people and finally approved me for the bus passes to get around and the, and the little bit, you know, every little bit helps and I'm glad that program has, is, is there but I just say for my situation, like I'm, I'm not getting that help and I just wish there was something there to, you know, to help, help more just getting stabilized with jobs and housing and just not being in this predicament. I've been in this predicament too long and it's, and I feel like I just been backed into a corner. Nobody's helping me or have been helping me, you know. Her dad don't want to help us and we just been in this situation and they just don't see a single mother, what is put on their shoulders all by themselves. Like what do you expect that person to do? Like I mean, get on their knees and cry to you and beg you and please, to help them instead of the looking at the situation as it has been, you know, and, you know, just going to sleep and crying sometimes because it's like, you know, I don't know what's going on but I just wish this situation would change but I just wanted to give my testimony in that and I thank you.

**Commissioner: Thank you, Jonetta.**

**Commissioner: Thank you very much for your testimony. Would you be willing to answer some questions?**

Participant #1: Yes.

**Commissioner: Thank you very much for being here and coming all the way from Sacramento. I know it's a big sacrifice and I appreciate you also bringing your daughter. Can you talk a little bit about some of the circumstances or what happened that have led you to be homeless?**



Participant #1: Yes, where I, where I was staying, I went there to pay my rent and they were closed and my daughter had an appointment, so we took off and, because we have to walk there. It took us like 40 minutes and after we, we came back, they, they were still closed and I said, "Okay, no one's in this office. You're closed. That don't make no sense to take your rent," and they don't have, they didn't have a drop box, so, you know, I know you would say, "Put it in the drop box," but there, they didn't have a drop box. So I held on to the money and then I, and then I just was like, "Okay, I don't know what's going on," and then the next day, I went and talked to someone and they said, "Well, you have to bring your \$50.00 extra fee," and I said, "That's not right. You're the, you guys are the ones that were closed and then trying to charge somebody. That's not right. That is not right at all." And that's what led us and then they did a letter to say we have to go because I couldn't find the \$50.00 charge they wanted along with my rent.

**Commissioner: Can you talk about some of the work that you've done in the past? Were you working at the time or looking for work?**

Participant #1: Yes, I've been looking for work. I've been in the Sacramento area for like almost 5 years and I, I haven't had, I haven't had a job. I just been getting denied, denied, and not really given a chance.

**Commissioner: Is there anything else that you would like to say?**

Participant #1: No.

**Commissioner: Cherie, do you have any questions?**

**Commissioner: Thank you.**

**Commissioner: I have no questions. Thank you very much.**

**Commissioner: Thank you very much for your testimony.**

Participant #1: Thank you.



PUBLIC TESTIMONY PARTICIPANT #2

**Commissioner: Diane Woloshin [phonetic], how's that?**

Participant #2: You got it.

**Commissioner: Oh, my gosh.**

Participant #2: Hi, first of all, I want to thank you all for coming to California, thank you and welcome to Alameda County. I actually am the Director of Nutrition Services here in Alameda County. I'm also a founding member of the Open Food Policy Council but I am speaking as an individual because I actually have been sitting here this morning and just felt moved to make a few comments and recommendations, a little redundancy is a good thing for education purposes, as I've made my comments and there's a few things, I think, that we're missing that I just want to fill in some of the gaps.

**Commissioner: Thank you.**

Participant #2: So I think we've heard a lot about the suggestions to improve the safety net and antihunger programs and I really echo the sentiment of many of my colleagues and members of the public here today about doing no harm, maintaining and expanding programs, and investing in innovative delivery improvements. One improvement I really would like to see is looking at the school meal programs and I think that community eligibility was a really great first step but I think that there's a whole lot of administrative funds that we could be saving if we had no income determination.

Somebody had mentioned France as an innovative country in terms of waste recovery. I think that France is also innovative in their delivery of school meals, no eligibility requirements. Let's just feed our kids. The other thing I, I think we need federal assistance with is integration and connectivity of the food programs. Express lane eligibility was mentioned and I do think express lane eligibility needs to happen for all the federal food programs for TANF, for SNAP, for Medicaid, for WIC, for school meals, for senior programs, child and adult care food program, where there's eligibility going all different directions, where there's really no wrong door, where any one of those interview points could be the entry point and then we could have cross-eligibility, including having the CEOs being an entry point.

In Alameda County we've got the food bank that actually is one of the entry points for the SNAP program and I think it's one of the most effective entry points and I think that model could be replicated in many different venues with many different programs. We've heard a lot about they need to address root causes of hunger and I, too, echo that sentiment, that we really need to be looking at poverty, unemployment and underemployment and really



an education system that I think is not preparing our youth for the workforce. It's not preparing our youth to really enter into living wage jobs that will lead to self-sufficiency. We need to be investing in job pipelines for careers that really do lead to livable wage self-sustainability.

And lastly, I think a lot of other speakers have talked about the coexistence of hunger and malnutrition and obesity and one cause that was mentioned to that is our, our, the ability to get cheap, processed foods everywhere you look. Remember when you used to go to the gas station and all you used to buy at the gas station was gas? And now you go to the gas station and it's virtually a candy store, a junk food store, and, and it's just, it's everywhere that we turn and what hasn't been talked about is, is the relationship of that proliferation of all this cheap, available food to some of our federal food policies and, and where we're putting our federal subsidies and we've got cheap, available food because we subsidize cheap, available food products and why don't we take a look at using that subsidy tool and using it to make healthy fruits and vegetables available at a price people can afford? I've heard, I think you've heard from multiple [people] here, "I can't afford fruits and vegetables," and they can't because they're really out of the reach of affordability. I'm hoping that you will put in your recommendation to take a look at that subsidies tool and use it for good and not for foods that are harming our health.

**Commissioner: Thank you very much.**

Participant #2: Thank you.



PUBLIC TESTIMONY PARTICIPANT #3

**Commissioner: Kevin Aslanian [phonetic], not going to come. Diane Davis?**

Participant #3: It's Diana Davis.

**Commissioner: I'm sorry, Diana Davis, welcome.**

Participant #3: Thank you. Good afternoon, my name is Diana Davis. I am a senior at St. Mary's Center, Senior Center, and I'm a senior on a very limited income. I stay in a room that costs much more than half of my income. Having enough to eat is a challenge every month. I take full advantage of programs like the Alameda County Food Bank and St. Mary's Center, where I receive hot meals and free food. With respect to these lifesaving programs, I am still also struggling with health conditions that demand healthy foods. It is difficult for me to eat healthy when I'm depending on what is available through the donations. They say, "Beggars can't be choosy, choosers," but it's not okay when diabetics and people with heart conditions have to choose between hunger and getting sicker. We need greater access to fresh food, vegetables, protein, fruits, expanding the CalFresh program would be a great start. I appreciate that this Board can do, what this Board can do to help me and my peers and thank you for listening.

**Commissioner: Thank you very much for your testimony.**



PUBLIC TESTIMONY PARTICIPANT #4

**Commissioner: Leslie Clark, please? Leslie Clark?**

Participant #4: Good afternoon.

**Commissioner: Good afternoon.**

**Commissioner: Good afternoon, sir.**

Participant #4: I'm Leslie Clark. I am standing before you a veteran of two wars, the Gulf War and the Vietnam Era War. I'm kind of heartfelt right now because I see so many different veterans who are struggling nutritionally. There was a gentleman I recall not long ago, I was getting off of work and he was standing at, on Highway 4, the entrance onto Highway 4 and he said, he had a sign, 'Sir, I'm a veteran, please, help me,' and I looked down at his feet and he had no toes and he had his feet wrapped in gunny sacks and something spoke to me in my heart and said, "Give him some money," but then I realized, I said, "I only had \$100.00 bills," you know, so I said, "Well, nah, I don't want to give him no \$100.00 bill," but then my heart said, "Give him some." So I gave him a \$100.00 bill and then at that juncture in my life, I knew something was extremely deep rooted in me to try and be some type of advocacy for some, for my fellow brothers, who have served, you know, just as, so once I became part of St. Mary's Center, the drive for me to, to learn more about advocacy, learn more about health, learn more about volunteering to become my brother's keeper. It just seemed like it was so right for me and so two days a week I work with North Oakland Baptist Church dispensing food out for the homeless, setting up tables and the canopies and stuff, so that we could give this food in a safe, clean environment and I just, I've been going to the VA a lot and I've been seeing a lot of veterans and even in my ministry in my church, I try and go spend my weekends and my Sundays with veterans, talking to them to try and keep them uplifted in their spirits and things of that nature but more over and more importantly, when I look out into the vast majority of veterans who are, are homeless, who are trying to find residency, trying to find shelter, it just tears my heart up to know that a country as rich as we are and we put these guys' lives in such traumatic situations that we should turn our backs on them. I think for the most part they should have all accessibility that they need to food programs, to shelter and things of that nature and basically, that's all I have to say.

**Commissioner: Thank you very much.**



PUBLIC TESTIMONY PARTICIPANT #5

**Commissioner: Ortencia?**

Participant #5: Good afternoon, ladies.

**Commissioner: Good afternoon.**

**Commissioner: Please, take the microphone and own it. There you go.**

Participant #5: My name is Ortencia Hopvi [phonetic] and I'm from St. Mary's. I live in a low-income marketplace in Oakland and I, I go to St. Mary's to help me eat. I grow my own food on my own, like vegetables, herbs, and I would like to suggest to many of these seniors to do that because you can help yourself without spending money on your medication, you stay healthy. I'll be 84 this Friday and I got a good report from my doctor. My low blood, you know, everything is perfect. My heart is perfect. So it would be so nice to share my information with the seniors and to get a little bit more educated in how to cook, how to make things grown and have healthy meals on your table for your children and without this food bank, I'm telling you, a lot of seniors will go hungry but with their help, we're surviving as best as we can and I, I come from a very large family of sixteen children and my mother never went to welfare. We worked in our backyard, so I'm continuing that and I would like to let you know that maybe you can help us like educate us more in how to handle our foods, vegetables and things because it's so hard. I've seen so many people in the corner when I go to St. Mary's, they're, they got their knees, their head on their knees and I, I'm just nosy. I stop and say, "Are you hungry?" and they'll say, "Yes," and with my last dollar I'll buy them something to eat. So I was thinking that maybe I thank the Commission's holding this hearing and will work with you to find better solutions for hunger in low-income community.

**Commissioner: Thank you, Ms. Hopvi.**





PUBLIC TESTIMONY PARTICIPANT #6

**Commissioner: Thank you very much for your testimony. Mr. Bill Collins? Bill Collins, how are you, sir?**

Participant #6: [inaudible]. I'd like to thank you for giving me a chance to speak. I have no computer data but I do have some data in regards to where I, I work with St. Mary's Center. I'm a hopeless justice advocate and a lot where I stay, we have 60 units and we do the Mercy Brown Bag and out of the 60 units, 35 to 40 are, I do the brown, bring them brown bags and I worked all my life and when I turned 65, I didn't realize that I'd have to eat healthy because all during the working, I never worried about what I ate. Now at 65 with, we had a problem with dentures first, no, no, and eating vegetables and things like that and now we're losing the vegetables, so it's hard for a senior to live a long life and healthy with now no teeth and learning what is healthy for him. So if the kids get a fresh start again, they won't be like us now and that's the thought I had.

**Commissioner: Thank you, sir.**

**Commissioner: Thank you very much, sir.**

**Commissioner: Gutar [phonetic] Whitfield?**

**Commissioner: Had another—**



PUBLIC TESTIMONY PARTICIPANT #7

**Commissioner: Oh, no, I'm sorry we missed him. Colleen Rivecca [phonetic]?**

Participant #7: Hi Commissioners.

**Commissioner: Hello.**

Participant #7: I'm really happy to be here today and thank you for coming so far to hear from us and for all the work that you're doing hearing from folks around the country about food insecurity and hunger and solutions. My name's Colleen Rivecca and I am the Advocacy Coordinator at St. Anthony Foundation. I'm also the Co-chair of California Hunger Action Coalition and at St. Anthony's, where I work, we are located in San Francisco. We are a multiservice nonprofit organization but one of our, our oldest and our flagship program is a free dining room. We call it a dining room, not a soup kitchen because we want people to feel at home and because we are also kind of intentionally trying to fight against the stigma that goes around with, with so many of the programs that help feed, feed people who are poor.

Our program serves about 2,600 meals a day on average. About 20% of the people who eat in our dining room are veterans, although 4% of the City of San Francisco, as a whole, are veterans. We also see single people, families with children, people who are homeless, people who have a job, people who have a place to live, people who have an income, people who have no income, a lot of diversity within the population that comes to us for free meals. We provide the meals without direct support from any government source of funding and everyone who comes in, as long as you're in line you get a meal. You don't have to prove that you're poor. You don't have to prove that you live in certain zip code. You don't have to prove that you were born, you know, in this country or whatever. You're in line, you've, you get a meal and I bring that up for a couple of reasons. I think that when I think about a message that I would like to give to, to Congress or that I would like to give to you to give to Congress about helping stop food insecurity, one of the messages that I'd like to give is so much of what we do to help folks who are poor or food insecure are related to programs that do a great job at helping people but also, every time Congress is talking about funding for those programs, we're also at the same time hearing a lot of news and a lot of stories that really demonize, stigmatize people who are poor and for, from the perspective of someone who receives those benefits, that feeling of stigma and shame is something that can prevent people from, you know, asking for help at all and is something that stays with them every time they go to the grocery store and they're paying with EBT and they are seeing people look in their cart or the person who's checking them out through the line look at their cart and examine what they're buying.



I think that our national discourse around hunger and poverty, I think that Congress is complicit in, in helping those stereotypes to continue and to thrive and it really goes against the sort of idea for why these programs should exist and why, why are governments funding them in the first place. We're shooting ourselves in the foot when we're doing that. And so respect, I think, is a very, really important part of the first step in terms of helping people who are facing food [in]security to be able to be on a path towards not experiencing hunger. If we're not respecting the people that we're purporting to help then we're not helping. The second thing I wanted to bring up and is, is related to something that's happening across the country, the criminalization of food sharing programs, especially programs that, that share food with the homeless.

So the National Coalition for the Homeless put out a report about a year ago called Share No More, A Criminalization of Efforts to Feed People in Need, and I think that any kind of discussion about nationally what can be done to help people who are suffering from hunger, we're missing a big piece if we're not talking about the fact that just from 2013 to 2014 alone, 54, 54 cities in 25 states restricted or criminalized the practice of sharing food with poor people. Oftentimes when this happens, it's a way to, it's a response to poverty and to, and to, specifically homeless, homelessness and hunger among homeless people, where people assume that if we feed people that their, their areas are going to be somehow overrun with people or that it's, that it's a bad thing to create an environment that's welcoming or in some way addresses the, you know, the needs of people who are, who are hungry by providing these types of programs. So there's three types of things that, that these restrictions usually do. Either they'll restrict the use of public property for feeding people. They'll put together really very stringent food safety regulations that they'll put on the groups that are feeding people and these really are not regulations that are meant to promote food safety more than that are meant to make it more difficult for people to feed people in need in their communities in the places where they are. The third one, the third thing that happens, which is not legislative, but is kind of a between-the-lines kind of thing is pressure and harassment from community groups, neighborhood groups and other types of groups for organizations that put together programs to feed the homeless where they'll be kind of forced out of different neighborhoods or, or areas or sort of shut down by that type of pressure. So the full report is online and I'm happy to, you know, [to] send you the link, if you'd like it but I wanted to bring that up as an important piece of the puzzle. There's so many multifaceted issues that are related to hunger, housing, health care and that is one that I wanted to bring up and that I think that it's happening nationally and so Congress should know that this is happening and, and that it is, it is harming our efforts to help people truly in need. Thanks.

**Commissioner: Thank you very much.**



PUBLIC TESTIMONY PARTICIPANT #8

**Commissioner: Dana Frasz [phonetic]?**

Participant #8: Frasz [phonetic]?

**Commissioner: Frasz, sorry?**

Participant #8: Thanks for being here. I'm glad to be here. I'm the Founder and Director of Food Shift, an organization in Oakland. We're going to connect the dots between food waste and hunger. I know you've already spoken with some folks that I work with here and I really want to back up all that's already been said and also want to just kind of zoom in into the food recovery space, specifically. Food Shift has really been working on uncovering the gaps and opportunities around food rescue. We're wasting 40% of all the food we produce in this country. It's absolutely crazy and no other industry would ever allow that much waste and yet, it's happening in our food system. And clearly, there's an opportunity to connect all that surplus food with people who need it. There's also an opportunity to create jobs through recovering that surplus food and that's where I think we really need to focus. We really need some innovation in the food recovery space. It's not just about picking up food and dropping it off at a dining hall or some kind of food assistance center. How can we actually capture the most value from all of this food, valued at \$165 billion? That's what we're throwing away and it's costing us \$750 million each year just to dispose of that food. So we're investing an incredible amount of resources into growing this food, transporting it, getting it to where it needs to go and then paying to have it thrown away.

Meanwhile, Bob and several other food recovery groups, something like 50,000 across the country that are working to recover food and feed people are scraping by, really challenged by not having the infrastructure they need to adequately recover, process, redistribute food. So there's, we hear from food recovery groups all the time that they wish they could get more food but they don't have a car or transportation. They don't have refrigeration. They don't have a kitchen or they're limited on storage space. These are pretty simple things and things that are actually most likely in our community but that maybe underutilized. So there are some innovative ways we can use the resources that are already in our communities towards food recovery efforts. And then food recovery groups are also, as Bob mentioned, small and fragmented in their efforts and if we look at any efficient system, whether it's, for example, recycling, composting, or other waste management, they have paid workers who have uniforms and trucks and internal logistic systems and they are compensated by businesses and community members to do the work they're doing. Food recovery is so essential. It's such an important part of this puzzle and it's a really great opportunity to educate community members, provide jobs, reduce waste, and, and feed the hungry at the same time. This and another comment that I wanted to build on is just the interconnection and the overlap of all these different issues. So I know waste



management isn't hunger and, you know, education isn't hunger but all these issues really do overlap and so I would just really encourage looking at this from that multidisciplinary perspective. We've been doing a lot of research in Santa Clara County over the last 6 months and talking with businesses and food assistance centers to understand what are their main challenges. Infrastructure is a big one. We'd like to recommend some kind of food rescue working group within the Hunger Commission to really pull together stakeholders from academia, from the business world, from the policy space to start to see, okay, we know that there's a lot that needs to happen to reduce hunger but how can we really use food rescue and food recovery to address hunger? And I have some other notes that I'll share with you but that's basically it. This is a huge opportunity to reduce waste, create jobs, and also, a huge opportunity to create a reducing impact on the environment. If food waste were a country, it would be the third largest greenhouse gas emitter and we're obviously wasting a lot of water and resources when we waste food, too. Thank you so much.

**Commissioner: Thank you so much.**

**Commissioner: Thank you for your testimony.**

Participant #8: Should I leave these with you?

**Commissioner: Yeah, please do, Mary will take them. We have 5 minutes left and no more names on our list. It's your moment. Come on forward. You, too. If you could just line up towards the end so we can get a sense.**



PUBLIC TESTIMONY PARTICIPANT #9

Participant #9: Good afternoon, my name is Andrea Jones. Thank you for inviting us here. I'm with the Alameda County Food Bank and I work at Shallow Baptist in Hayward and I live with my mom. I pick up food in various places for my mother and I. My mother and I do need vegetables because we're both diabetics and it affects our organs if we don't get the right green vegetables. We have to have daily vegetables, green, every day, at least dinnertime and lunchtime, twice a day. When I don't get the green vegetables, excuse my French, but I do, I go to the restroom a lot. I can feel a difference in my organs. And when I get the green vegetables and exercise it, it don't bothers me but when I exercise and don't get the green vegetables, I constantly go. I'm not going to use your 7 minutes but I just want to thank you for having me here and when I did work with Shallow Baptist Church in Hayward, it's a lot of people that come there and they, it's sort of like a check they depend on, you know. Sister Suzanna that works there, she goes to Trader Joe's and different stores and has someone rides with her in the van to come back and we set everything up and wipe off the tables and, you know, have everything out for the people that comes in. It's so many people that depends on that food, even I, myself. A Spanish lady that came in there, she couldn't even speak English, this was an elderly lady, I'm like, "Who come here with her?" Nobody and we set her up a big box. She was speaking Spanish. I'm like, "Oh, my God." I have to help her. She tried to give me \$2.00 and I carried the box on my shoulder for her and she said, "Thank you, gracias." I said, "No pay, free." And I believe no one X'd out when it comes to being hungry and I believe that everyone should be fed. That's all I have to say.

**Commissioner: Thank you very much.**

**Commissioner: Thank you, ma'am.**



## PUBLIC TESTIMONY PARTICIPANT #10

Participant #10: Hi, I'm Evelyn County and I'm noticing the time, so I'll be quick. I'm a volunteer at Alameda County Community Food Bank, as well, a longtime volunteer. I've been volunteering there for 17 years now. And the reason I started volunteering is because I needed help with food myself. I was a single mom raising a son and working full time but still not able to put food on the table and I was wondering how was I going to do that each and every day but the main thing I wanted to say here, because of the limited time, is I was told by one of my friendly advocates that once I turned 60 I was eligible for Food Stamps and I applied for Food Stamps. I didn't know that but I was told that, so I took her advice and did it. They very promptly denied me and said, "Sorry, but you make too much money," and I'm, and I questioned that. I actually even went back to her. She's sitting in this room, I went back to her and said, "Guess what? I've been denied." And she's like, "No, that's not supposed to be. You're 60 years old. You should be approved." So because of that backing and because of that support, I was able to fight it. I had to go through Legal Aid and tell them, "Yes, I am eligible. You better check your records, go back and research this." They did and I was approved finally but the only reason I'm bringing that up is because if I didn't know that or if I didn't have that background, I would be one of the many that said, "Okay, I was denied," and still be struggling to this day but I do have my Food Stamps now, thankfully, and it's what helps me get through day-to-day. That's it, bottom line. I did it in a minute, thank you.

**Commissioner: Thank you very much, ma'am.**

Participant #10: Thank you, Commissioners. I just want to take this opportunity to point out that the people who presented and testimony today about their own experiences in hunger and the indignities that they've experienced as a result are also great heroes to the state of California. Today they shared with you their vulnerable sides but they're, they're immense champions. Jonetta Hall, who talked to you earlier today was a lead testimony in a Bill called Calling Jobs Home, which brings home the call center that services our EBT contract from Juarez, Mexico, where it is today, creating jobs outside of our state and of our country and will bring it back to California next year and they'll be about 80 jobs created because of, you know, of Jonetta and her testimony and of, of that piece of legislation. Evelyn County told you about her own personal advocacy and how reporting what happened to her at the county SNAP agency, that actually led to an investigation into the computer system, which identified that the computer system was incorrectly denying elderly and disabled people by applying to them a gross income test that they weren't eligible for and has, has broadened and made eligibility for many more seniors experiencing hunger. And not only that, she's attended more Hunger Action Days in our state capital than almost anybody in the room and she was there in the first time I ever attended and has been part of a campaign to repeal our lifetime ban for people with prior drug felony convictions from receiving food aid. You see the seniors at St. Mary's Center



and they host an incredible community of activists who helped to change state policy, county policy, and city policy that impact so many people and inspire advocates like me. So I was hopeful to end on, on a note to, on this specific note to make sure that you know that even though there are tears and, and great frustration, there's a great will and ability for people to contribute like they did today in policy changes as we hope that you will take their voices forward. We know you will to help make policy change in our nation's capital. Thank you so much for everything you do.

**Commissioner: Thank you so much.**

**Commissioner: Cherie, did you want to make some final remarks?**

**Commissioner: Sure, final remarks, I just, I'm so proud of everybody that's here today and so happy that you have been here to speak and give us words to bring back that will inform our report, that will inform our colleagues at the Hunger Commission. It is a rich experience and we are very grateful. Thank you.**

**Commissioner: I want to echo your sentiment, Cherie. Thank you all for being here. It has been a very powerful day for us. I've learned an enormous amount. I hope that we can integrate all of the commentary that you have provided today into our report but please, remember that this report is just a single report due in a single moment of time and it's going to take a lot of advocacy and a lot of effort and a lot of will to address hunger in America. So we can create the report but it's up to you all to make sure that that report gets seen and heard and that the work continues, so please, stay in touch with the National Commission. Please, tell your friends and colleagues about the Commission and please, make sure that the report that we generate actually has a long life and we'll try to make it as visionary as possible but the work continues way beyond the work at the National Commission. So thanks to each of you for being here.**

**Commissioner: We honor you. [Applause]**

**Commissioner: And thanks to Mary Council from RTI.**

**Commissioner: We need to give this back to Mary.**