

## **TESTIMONY TO NATIONAL COMMISSION ON HUNGER**

*Submitted via webpage*

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The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts serves the four western counties of MA, where 1 out of 8 people are at risk of hunger, 20% of children are food insecure and about 71% of our clients live at or below the federal poverty level. Emergency food can only relieve hunger pains; it cannot solve food insecurity.

SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly Food Stamps) is crucial to build stability for families to move out of poverty. SNAP improves health, feeds families, qualifies children for free school meals and stimulates local economies.

SNAP benefits are too low and do not count all living expenses; people are often told they make “too much money” to qualify; shelter calculations do not reflect actual housing costs by state; medical expenses can only be claimed by seniors and disabled individuals; veterans receiving VA disability under 100% are not eligible for claiming their disability for SNAP. This vital program must become a more realistic support.