

**National Hunger Commission Hearing June 15<sup>th</sup>, Oakland, California.**  
**Sarah Palmer, Additional Comments**

In addition to my comments, I would like to add that the state of California has extremely high housing costs. Low-income individuals and families struggle to cover rent and are left without many of the other essentials, or are forced to navigate homelessness.

The 1.3 million people, receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) in California are in dire straits and currently living at 90% of the Federal Poverty Guideline<sup>1</sup> without the ability to receive CalFresh (SNAP) and left to find housing in a predatory and volatile rental market<sup>2</sup>.

If the state had been providing a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) based on the California Necessities Index (CNI) every year starting in 2007-08 (with the state's portion of the COLA provided each June 1), the grant for individuals would be \$1,061 per month as of June 1, 2015. This would be equal to 108.1% of the federal poverty guideline for an individual in 2015. Sadly, this is not the case.

I would like to include the ratio of SSI grants to housing markets in California to demonstrate how impossible this situation is for so many Californians:

Los Angeles/Long Beach 126%  
Mono County 110%  
Napa 129%  
Nevada County 117%  
Oakland/Fremont 144%  
Orange County 146%  
Oxnard/Thousand Oaks/Ventura 132%  
Riverside/San Bernardino/Ontario 104%  
Salinas 113%  
San Benito County 108%  
San Diego/Carlsbad/San Marcos 121%  
San Francisco 186%  
San Jose/Sunnyvale/Santa Clara 162%  
San Luis Obispo/Paso Robles 116%  
Santa Barbara/Santa Maria/Goleta 139%  
Santa Cruz/Watsonville 148%  
Santa Rosa/Petaluma 119%  
Vallejo/Fairfield 110%

These numbers are unacceptable. It is clear that as a state and a nation, we need to address the cost of housing, and the way essential safety net benefits interact with this crucial component of survival.

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<sup>1</sup> Federal Poverty Guideline used by the Federal Dept. of Health & Human Services.  
<http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/15poverty.cfm>

<sup>2</sup> California Budget and Policy Center report including Fair Market Rental values for studio apartments in CA. <http://calbudgetcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/Fact-Sheet-3.11.15-Due-to-State-Cuts-SSI-SSP-Grants-Lose-Ground-to-Housing-Costs.pdf>