

City of Philadelphia



Council of the City of Philadelphia
Office of the Chief Clerk
Room 402, City Hall
Philadelphia

(Resolution No. 120041)

RESOLUTION

Urging the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare State to reconsider its proposed asset test in order for needy Pennsylvanians to receive benefits under the Supplement Nutrition Assistance Program.

WHEREAS, The Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare has proposed a rule change to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) that would require all recipients pass an “assets test.” As of May 1, 2012, Pennsylvanians under age 60 can have no more than \$2,000 in savings and persons over 60 can have no more than \$3,250 to be eligible for food stamps; and

WHEREAS, The new formula would require recipients to be virtually destitute in order to qualify for food assistance, and fully emptying their bank accounts which further impoverishes families that are already struggling; and

WHEREAS, Census data found Philadelphia to be the poorest among the country’s 10 largest cities, and the 1st District one of the hungriest, second only to the Bronx, New York; and

WHEREAS, Twenty Percent or 1 in 4 Pennsylvanians today are age 60 or older and Philadelphia has the largest percentage of older adults among the country’s top 10 cities (17.9%) and 1 in 5 of those older adults are living in poverty. Almost 20% of Philadelphians elders are poor or economically vulnerable and raising young children, whose birth parents are deceased, incarcerated, ill or substance abused; and

WHEREAS, The number of children in Philadelphia living in poverty is close to 33 percent, according to U.S. Census data released in September, more than 29 percent; and

WHEREAS, The rule change could affect as many as 464,000 Philadelphians currently eligible for food stamps. Almost 30 percent of City residents rely on food stamps for basic survival as well as businesses and grocery stores that depend on purchases by food stamp recipients will be economically impacted; and

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WHEREAS, The new rule will put Pennsylvania out of sync with the 35 states, including New Jersey, that have abolished asset limits in acknowledgment of today's poor economy. A spokeswoman for the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare said the asset test is a way to ensure that "people with resources are not taking advantage of the food stamp program." But she offered no evidence of a problem so widespread that it required this drastic response. In fact, Pennsylvania has one of the lowest food stamp fraud rates in the nation — a tenth of 1 percent; and

WHEREAS, Pennsylvania receives about \$2.5 billion in federal funds through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, and; the state also pays about \$160 million annually to maintain the food stamp program; and

WHEREAS, Pennsylvania scrapped the asset test in 2008 because it was hurting senior citizens who had meager savings; and

WHEREAS, In this economy, the state shouldn't be making it harder for people who need help to get it, especially with federal statistics showing that Pennsylvania has one of the lowest food-stamp fraud rates in the nation: in fact, the state recently won a federal award for running its program efficiently, federal officials say; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Public Welfare plan will particularly punish elderly people saving for their burials, poor people trying to save enough money to get out of poverty, and working- and middle-class people who lost their jobs in the recession and may now have to liquidate assets to feed their families; and

WHEREAS, In 2010, The Obama Administration has awarded Pennsylvania a additional \$1,125,127.00 to increase enrollment in SNAP amongst elderly income struggling adults because many are not applying due to already existing program rules, stigma, unawareness of eligibility, and lack of transportation; and

WHEREAS, The proposed changes to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); will strongly affect many Philadelphians for it represents means choosing between buying food or paying rent, or limiting food intake to one meal a day or even going days without eating; now therefore

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it strongly urges the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare State to reconsider its proposed asset test in order for needy Pennsylvanians to receive benefits under the Supplement Nutrition Assistance Program.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, Governor Corbett and all members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly as evidence of the grave concern of this legislative body.

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CERTIFICATION: This is a true and correct copy of the original Resolution, Adopted by the Council of the City of Philadelphia on the second of February, 2012.

Darrell L. Clarke
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Michael A. Decker
CHIEF CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Introduced by: Councilmembers Jones, Johnson, Reynolds Brown and Quiñones Sánchez

Sponsored by: Councilmembers Johnson, Reynolds Brown and Quiñones Sánchez, Bass and Blackwell