

# Witnesses to Hunger

Testimony  
Before the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing  
Boston, MA

Tuesday, May 2, 2017

Dear Chairman Welch, Chairman Sanchez, and the distinguished members of the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing:

My name is Juell Frazier. I am the proud mother of two children and live in Dorchester. I am also a member of Witnesses to Hunger, a group of parents, such as myself, who are real experts on poverty and food insecurity because we have experienced these hardships firsthand. Thank you for the opportunity to tell my story and support Senate bill 612, "An Act improving public health through a common application for core food, health and safety-net programs".

When my oldest daughter was only 18 months old, my family fell on hard times. We needed support so I enrolled my child in Early Head Start and began the process of connecting to various assistance programs including SNAP and MassHealth. Applying for these programs was difficult. I do not have a car and filling out separate applications, which often include turning in many different verifications and forms, was exhausting, time consuming, and logistically complicated having to rely on the bus and the T.

Today, I have two children and remaining connected to necessary programs is difficult, especially given the hardships that my family faces. I've been working temp jobs and looking for stable work for several years, but have experienced many challenges in accomplishing my goals. I have a child with disabilities that often requires immediate attention, I have been diagnosed with a chronic heart condition that frequently leaves me tired, and my family has struggled to remain stable in our housing. Since 2010, I've had to move my family multiple times because unsafe housing conditions and unresponsive landlords have threatened the health and well-being of my children. Juggling all of these responsibilities is hard in and of themselves, and adding burdensome and repetitive application processes increases my stress. Complicated and disconnected applications are a barrier for me and others like me with health issues. Running around to submit paperwork for agencies that should be connected is astoundingly overwhelming. It is hard for me to go back to work and fulfill the hopes and dreams I have for my family if I am unable to regain myself mentally and emotionally. I want to feel good so I can go back to work and reducing barriers to programs that keep my family and me healthy while I search for a safe home and stable job is crucial.

It is important to connect MassHealth, SNAP, and other public assistance systems because it would save time for individuals to do other necessary things, such as find work or work more hours, and would relieve the pressure and stress of making so many different trips to fill out the same application. I hope the committee will favorably report out this piece of important legislation.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Juell Frazier  
Member of Witnesses to Hunger, Boston