

Sept. 4, 2007

Tracie Drew, Chief
Bureau of Administrative Rules and Procedures
Department of Human Services
100 South Grand Avenue East
Harris Building, 3rd Floor
Springfield, IL 62762

Re: Notice of Proposed Amendments to the Food Stamp program published on
July 20, 2007 in 31 Illinois Register, pages 10446-61

Dear Ms. Drew:

We are writing to urge the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) to reconsider its proposal to reduce the Food Stamps of certain families with children under age six, which, if implemented, would have a devastating effect on the health and well-being of very young children.

Under federal law, states can exempt families with children under age six from having their Food Stamps sanctioned (reduced) if an adult in the family incurs a Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) sanction for failing to comply with a work activity requirement. 34 out of 34 states have elected to exempt these families from having their Food Stamps reduced (the other 15 states do not operate under the same Food Stamp waiver as Illinois so this is not an issue for them).

The 34 states that have chosen not to reduce the food stamps of families that include a child under age six when an adult in the family fails to comply with a TANF work activity requirement recognize that having enough food is the most basic of human needs and that normal brain development is impeded in very young children who are hungry, undernourished, and in poor health. Food Stamps are 100% federally funded so Illinois would realize no savings from this proposed policy.

IDHS' proposed policy departs from its consistent past practice of maximizing the federally-funded Food Stamps available to its residents in need. In the interests of the health, well-being and normal development of Illinois' youngest and poorest children, the 50 undersigned organizations urge IDHS to reverse its proposed policy and to exempt from Food Stamp sanctions households that include a child under age six.

Sincerely,

A T Roseborough & Associates
AIDS Foundation of Chicago
AIDS Legal Counsel of Chicago
Carole Robertson Center for Learning
Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago

Center for Economic Progress
Center for Tax & Budget Accountability
Center for New Horizons
Chicago Coalition for the Homeless
Chicago Jobs Council
Citizen Action/Illinois
Community Renewal Society
Corporation for Supportive Housing
Families' and Children's AIDS Network
Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Illinois
Greater West Town Community Development Project
Growing Home Inc.
Health & Disability Advocates
Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights
Illinois Action for Children
Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health
Illinois Coalition for Community Services
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant & Refugee Rights
Illinois Community Action Association
Illinois Hunger Coalition
Illinois Maternal & Child Health Coalition
Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago
Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing
LEED Council, Inc.
Lutheran Advocacy Illinois
Lutheran Social Services of Illinois
National Association of Social Workers—IL Chapter
Open Door Clinic
Ounce of Prevention Fund
Project IRENE
Protestants for the Common Good
Redmon Lee Center
Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
Service Employees International Union Local 880
Southern Illinois Regional Social Services
The Coalition of Site Administered Child Care Programs
The Emergency Fund
The People's Resource Center of DuPage County
The Renaissance Women
UCAN Chicago
University of Illinois Extension-DeKalb County
Vital Bridges
Voices for Illinois Children
Wayside Cross Ministry
YWCA's Illinois

cc: Dr. Carol Adams