



State of Connecticut
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Commission on Children



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 18, 2010

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Connecticut children are going hungry; lawmakers will hold news conferences Monday to tout a solution

Connecticut Speaker of the House Christopher G. Donovan and Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro will lead the Speaker's Task Force on Children in the Recession in holding simultaneous news conferences around the state on Monday morning to draw attention to the plight of hungry children throughout Connecticut – and to urge passage of legislation aimed at combating it.

The news conferences will begin at 10 a.m. at the following locations:

Amazing Grace Food Pantry, 139 Main Street Extension, Middletown. Speakers: Speaker Donovan; Congresswoman DeLauro; House Majority Leader Denise Merrill; state Representative Gail Hamm of Middletown; and members of the Task Force, including Lucy Nolan, executive director of End Hunger Connecticut!, and Elaine Zimmerman, executive director of the Connecticut Commission on Children.

Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center, 27 Chase St., Pawcatuck. Speakers: Representative Diana Urban of North Stonington, co-chair of the Task Force.

Enfield Food Shelf, 96 Alden Avenue, Enfield. Speakers: Representative Karen Jarmoc of Enfield, the other co-chair of the Task Force.

At all three news conferences, speakers will urge the passage of [HB 5360, An Act Concerning Children in the Recession](#). The product of public-hearing testimony and research collected by the Task Force on Children in the Recession, this bill addresses an array of problems faced by the estimated 35,000 Connecticut children who are expected to fall into poverty because of the recession. Hunger is one of the most acute problems – and one likely to have devastating long-term impacts on children and, by extension, the state's economy. The Task Force learned that:

- Connecticut is last in the nation when it comes to participation in the national School Breakfast Program, with only 39 percent of eligible children eating breakfast in school.

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- Nearly 11 percent of the households in Connecticut are “food insecure,” meaning the heads of these households are at high risk of being unable to feed themselves or their families.
- In 2009, food pantries reported a 30-50 percent increase in requests for assistance from 2008.
- Even though the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) has proven the most effective tool for ensuring that people don’t go hungry, an estimated 30 percent of the Connecticut families that are eligible do not participate.
- In the 3rd quarter of 2008, the 2-1-1 info-line received 6,000 calls regarding food and nutrition questions; at the end of the third quarter of 2009, about 9,000 calls were received.
- Half of all U.S. children will, at some point during their childhoods, live in households that use food stamps, according to a recent study conducted by Washington University in St. Louis and Cornell University in New York.
- Connecticut is losing \$9 million in federal funds because it doesn’t participate in certain child nutrition programs.
- Fully 75 percent of the children who eat free or reduced-price lunches at school do not receive meals from the summer feeding program, even though they’d qualify.

HB 5360 addresses this situation by requiring the state Department of Social Services (DSS) to work with other agencies provide more entry points for applying for food stamps and the federal Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program. The goals are to improve nutritional access for families; increase federal reimbursements; and diminish the effects of food insecurity on children's cognition, behavior, developmental growth, and educational achievement.

It also requires the state Department of Education (SDE) to administer a child nutrition outreach program. The programs should: 1) increase participation in the federal School Breakfast, Summer Food Service, and Child and Adult Care Food programs, and 2) secure federal reimbursement for the programs.

The outreach program must: 1) encourage schools to participate in the federal school breakfast program and use innovative ways to serve breakfast in classrooms or elsewhere after school starts, rather than only in the cafeteria before school; 2) apply for state grants from the in-classroom breakfast program; 3) encourage local and regional school districts to (a) sponsor Summer Food Service Program sites, (b) recruit others to sponsor sites, and (c) make grants to sponsors to help them increase children's participation; 4) encourage day care centers to participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; and 5) publicize the availability of federally funded child nutrition programs throughout the state.