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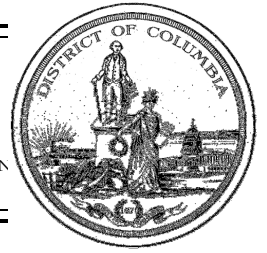
**OFFICE OF MARY M. CHEH**

COUNCILMEMBER, WARD 3

CHAIR, COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & THE ENVIRONMENT

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**REMARKS FOR SNAP EVENT AT BREAD FOR THE CITY**

**APRIL 6, 2010**

Three weeks ago (March 16), Councilmember Michael Brown and I co-introduced the SNAP Expansion Act of 2010. All 11 other members of the Council signed on as co-sponsors of this bill.

The United States Department of Agriculture, who administers the SNAP program, permits states to choose from a variety of policy options and tailor their state's SNAP program to meet the needs of local residents. This legislation would expand the District's SNAP program in three important ways:

1. **Transition Benefits:** The USDA permits states to provide SNAP benefits for five months to households who stop receiving TANF (welfare) benefits. This policy choice helps the poor obtain food while transitioning off government assistance. Nineteen states, including New York, Maryland, and Virginia, have adopted this policy.
2. **Standard Housing Deduction for the Homeless:** Homeless persons often have difficulty documenting their housing expenses, which can lower the amount of SNAP benefits they receive. Instead of requiring the homeless to prove all of their housing expenses, the USDA permits states to use a standard income deduction of \$143 for homeless participants in SNAP, which increases benefits for the homeless. Twenty-seven states, including New York, Maryland, and Virginia, have adopted this policy.
3. **Simplified Self-Employment Determination:** Similarly, self-employed persons often have difficulty documenting their own job related costs, which can lower the amount of SNAP benefits they receive. The USDA permits states to simplify

the process of determining self-employment costs, which increases benefits for the self-employed. Sixteen states, including California and Maryland, and Virginia, have adopted this policy.

These policy options were recommended by DC Hunger Solutions, the Capital Area Food Bank, and the Fair Budget Coalition, of which Bread for the City is a member.

The best part about these policy options is that they are **free to the District!** Because the federal government reimburses the District 100% for SNAP payments, adopting these policy changes will not have a fiscal impact (other than the nominal administrative cost of implementation). Therefore, adopting these options is not only good policy but it makes economic sense.

The bill has been referred to the Committee on Human Services, which is chaired by Councilmember Wells. Now that the entire Council has signed on to our bill as co-sponsors, I am hoping that this important legislation will move swiftly and be enacted soon.

At a time when many District residents are being severely affected by this difficult economy, our bill will help us to provide more benefits for needy residents and help them provide food for their families.