

March 26, 2015

The Honorable Charlie Baker
Governor of Massachusetts
Massachusetts State House
Office of the Governor, Room 280
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Baker,

I want to thank you and Secretary of Health and Human Services for suspending the automatic wage matches that the state utilized to determine Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligibility. We want to bring to your attention to the challenges the families we work with are facing in securing and maintaining SNAP. We are deeply concerned about the changes the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) has implemented recently resulting in erroneous case closures and erroneous application denials of critical federal SNAP benefits.

CWU is committed to serving one of the most vulnerable populations in the Commonwealth, low-income single women and their children. The current issues surrounding SNAP benefits and DTA are severely affecting the families we serve by necessitating their focus on how to feed their children rather than how to move out of poverty.

The majority of our concerns relate to documents being submitted to DTA and lost in the system, recertification paperwork submitted and not processed and erroneous, unfiltered wage matches being used; all of which are resulting in automatic and unjustified case closings. Additionally, we have heard stories from a number of families about federal work study income and income of a child under 18, being inaccurately counted as income resulting in wrongful loss of benefits. Our staff spends many hours helping clients sort out their emergency situations.

Thank you for taking measures to prevent these unnecessary case closures going forward. We urge you to investigate the thousands of SNAP cases closed in Massachusetts over the past year to determine whether these participants should be reinstated.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions.

Sincerely,



Elisabeth D. Babcock MCRP, Ph.D
President and CEO

Cc: Mayor Martin Walsh

Senator Elizabeth Warren

Senator Edward Markey

Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
United States Department of Agriculture

Kurt Messner, Acting Administrator
Food and Nutrition Service