

The Honorable Tom Corbett
Governor, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
225 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

Dear Governor Corbett:

As members of the Senior Support Coalition and on behalf of the older adults we serve, we are asking you to suspend the Department of Public Welfare's proposal to re-impose an asset test for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) that is scheduled to take effect in May of 2012.

We believe reinstating an asset test will be particularly punishing to older adults struggling to survive in the current economy. An estimated 2.5 million Pennsylvanians, including 700,000 who are 60 and older, are currently eligible for SNAP benefits. Many of those older adults have set aside assets for significant expenditures like emergency home repairs, property taxes or even funeral plans. Having those funds count against eligibility for SNAP benefits certainly forces seniors to make difficult choices that could jeopardize their health or increase the risk of significant debt in the future.

Perhaps most importantly, re-imposing an asset test for the SNAP program also threatens the ability of low-income older adults to remain in their homes. Having to choose between keeping a modest financial safety net in place or receiving nutritional assistance through the SNAP program, an increasing number of older adults will be forced to enter a nursing home--with Medicaid picking up the tab. That means any savings generated through a SNAP program asset test will be more than offset by increased Medicaid nursing home costs for those unable to remain at home.

The Senior Support Coalition is committed to strengthening Pennsylvania's system of home and community-based services for older adults. We recognize that SNAP provides vital benefits that help seniors remain at home and connected to friends and family. All the research shows that keeping older adults at home for as long as possible saves the state money in the long run by delaying or reducing nursing home placements. Of course, it's also what seniors want.

In our view, an asset test for the SNAP program will create a tremendous hardship for vulnerable low-income older adults. We encourage you to follow the lead of the 39 states which currently have no asset test in place for SNAP benefits, and suspend the implementation of this harmful policy that will negatively impact older adults struggling to make ends meet.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,