



Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC)
516 West Lookerman St., Dover, DE 19904
302-739-4553 (voice) 302-739-6126 (fax) <http://www.gacec.delaware.gov>

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 14, 2014

TO: The Honorable Members of the Delaware General Assembly

FROM: Terri Hancharick, Chairperson
GACEC

RE: **House Bill No. 293 (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)**

The Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC) has reviewed House Bill No. 293 which would amend State law by adding the following limit on purchases: "Benefits provided pursuant to this Chapter shall only be used for foods, food products, and beverages that have beneficial nutritional value." The Department of Health & Social Services (DHSS) would be directed to issue implementing regulations to "identify specific foods, food products, and beverages, or general categories of foods, food products, and beverages ...that have beneficial nutritional value." DHSS would also be required to apply for a waiver from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to permit implementation of the law. Council is **opposed** to the proposed legislation.

As reflected in recent News Journal articles, the USDA has never granted a SNAP waiver limiting benefits to foods that are considered to be healthy. The legislation is opposed by DHSS and the Delaware Food Bank. The Food Bank CEO offered the following observation:

The biggest barrier between low-income Delawareans and a healthy diet is not a lack of will or self-control, but a lack of affordability and accessibility. ... Fresh, healthy food is just more expensive than the alternatives and in some neighborhoods it's not even stocked in some stores.

Since the benefits average \$1.40 per person per meal, recipients are hard-pressed to budget for the purchase of basic food products. A recent News Journal editorial questioned the wisdom underlying the bill and suggested the adoption of positive incentives for electing healthier foods:

Limiting shopping choices to 'nutritional foods' is wrong-minded and meddlesome at the 'Big Brother' level. Rewards in the form of a little extra subsidy for better health choices will do a

lot more to change food stamp recipients' poor eating habits.

Finally, a one-size-fits-all list of "healthy" foods may be an elusive goal. Some would theorize that "red meat" is unhealthy, that canned soup with typically high sodium content is unhealthy, and that non-organic produce is unhealthy. Individuals may be on special diets which may not match a regulatory list of "approved" foods.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our position and observations. Please feel free to contact me or Wendy Strauss should you have questions.