



News Release

Contact: Dana Hartenstein

dana@hungertaskforce.org

(414) 238-6477 (desk)

(414) 588-1131 (cell)

STATE FAILS FOODSHARE APPLICANTS

Governor Doyle Places Milwaukee on Involuntary Hunger Strike

Milwaukee (November 4, 2009) — The majority of Milwaukeeans trying to secure food assistance are being forced to wait up to 100 days to get emergency food benefits.

Recent information released by the state shows that more than 126,000 people applied for FoodShare since the state took over the program in May 2009. Nearly 17,000 of these people were determined to be “expedited” cases, which means **they live in crisis and have a federal right to receive benefits within 7 days**. For more than 11,500 of these people living without food, **it took up to 3 ½ months for their applications to get approved**.

Ironically, in an effort to control phone calls inquiring about the status of applicants, the state has reduced its phone service to 20 hours a week to “catch up”. The toll free number (1-888-947-6583) set up to assist those who wish to register for benefits over the phone currently operates 4 days a week from 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

FoodShare, formerly known as Food Stamps, entitles the recipient to federal help when they have little or no money for food. According to the USDA, each FoodShare dollar spent at the grocery store has a multiplying economic impact of \$1.84 to the local economy. Based on state reports, Hunger Task Force approximates a loss of 21.5 million dollars in local federal funding due to the backlog in FoodShare benefits. (FoodShare = \$)

It was the decision of the state government to take on welfare in Milwaukee and they should develop an outreach plan to remedy the situation. Those living in crisis are protected by federal rights, including the right to receive an application when requested, receiving FoodShare benefits within 30 days if eligible (or 7 days if an expedited case), and receiving a fair hearing if there is disagreement with action taken on a case.

Visuals: Coggs Center (welfare office) at 12th and Vliet, Room 105

Interviews: Available by request, contact Dana Hartenstein at (414) 588-1131.

Hunger Task Force is an anti-hunger organization which believes that every person has a right to adequate food obtained with dignity. Hunger Task Force works to prevent hunger and malnutrition by providing free food to people in need today and by promoting social policies to achieve food security tomorrow.

###