



Missouri Association for Social Welfare

Did you know . . .

- **The US Department of Agriculture estimated that an average of approximately 274,014 households in Missouri (or 11.7 of all households) had trouble affording food from 2003 to 2005?**
- **54% of food pantry clients in Mid-Missouri have children and 2% of these households include both adults over the age of 65 and children?**
-Survey by University of Missouri, 2005
- **According to the USDA, 6% of elderly households in the United States in 2005 had trouble affording food.**

FACT SHEET ON HOUSE BILL 454: SUPPLEMENTAL FOOD STAMPS GOOD FOR MISSOURI SENIORS – GOOD FOR MISSOURI

- The minimum Food Stamp benefit of \$10 was set in 1974 and has not been adjusted to account for inflation or other factors. Today, \$25 of food stamps can only purchase the amount of food that \$10 would have bought in 1974. **Thus, the minimum Food Stamp benefit is woefully inadequate for many elderly Food Stamp recipients who often live on a fixed income, such as Supplemental Security Insurance (SSI) benefits or retirement benefits.**
- In Missouri, 47,000 households with elderly people are receiving Food Stamps (16.1 percent of all Food Stamp households in Missouri). It is estimated that 5,341 elderly one-person households received the minimum benefit in Fiscal Year 2005 and that approximately 400 elderly two-person households received the minimum benefit in Fiscal Year 2005.
- **It is difficult for these elderly households to cover rent, medical care, utilities and still pay for food on a meager income.** \$10 per month in food stamp benefits will not make any appreciable difference in these households' financial difficulties – many of whom have high medical expenses – and does little to alleviate their difficult financial circumstances. Implementing a state-funded supplemental food stamp program will help to remedy this situation for many elderly Missourians.
- **The elderly population is the fastest growing segment of America's population and elderly individuals often have special dietary and health needs.** The minimum food stamp benefit may not meet these dietary needs, thereby causing health problems resulting from inadequate

nutrition. In addition, these seniors who receive the minimum food stamp benefit “sometimes have to choose between paying for health care and paying for food.” By increasing the minimum amount of food stamps for poor elderly Missourians, House Bill 454 would provide a positive boost to elderly individuals who need help with purchasing food.

- **Implementing supplemental food stamp benefits in Missouri will increase participation in the *federal* Food Stamp Program among needy elderly individuals.** In FY 2004, only about 28.4 percent of eligible elderly people were participating in the federal Food Stamp Program across the country. Repeated testimony before the USDA during the Farm Bill forums revealed that the minimum food stamp benefit is often a deterrent to those that need help with purchasing food. House Bill 454 would remove this deterrent and encourage more seniors to apply for nutrition assistance through the *federal* food stamp program.
- **Because federal food stamp benefits are 100 percent federally funded, the legislation would have the additional benefit of bringing more federal resources into Missouri. These federal dollars generate economic benefits for state and local economies.** USDA indicates that every \$5 in Food Stamps generates \$9.20 in economic activity. Moreover, \$1 billion of “retail food demand” by food stamp recipients generates 3,300 farm jobs. In fact, the Food Stamp Program pumped \$737.6 million into the Missouri economy in 2005, resulting in an estimated \$1.36 billion of economic activity and benefiting farmers, grocers, and small businesses throughout the state. It is reasonable to expect that the supplemental food stamps would have a similar economic impact in Missouri.

