



Comments from Barbara Prather, Executive Director, Northeast Iowa Food Bank

SF 494

Why must we make things harder for people who need help? Last spring when the Disaster Proclamation ended, the numbers of those who needed services through Food Banks and Food Pantries went up each month. We have provided more food to more people. One pantry in northeast Iowa served 3200 families in the month of March 2022 and in March of 2023 served 4800 households. Couple that with inflation and supply chain issues and funding for USDA Commodities decreasing, Food Banks were scrambling. Thanks to private sources of funding from Corporations, Foundations, Churches, and Individuals we were able to access food by purchasing and partnering with our local communities to strive to meet the needs of those facing hunger.

SF 494, will make it harder for Food Banks and Food Pantries to sustain ourselves for the long term. Families, because of onerous applications requirements won't or don't apply, and communities in Iowa will continue to be asked to provide more resources. Wouldn't it be wonderful if all those who QUALIFIED for SNAP actually applied and received it? Then maybe we could worry about someone getting it that shouldn't. I am all for streamlining processes, but can we stop making it harder for people to receive benefits. Two items to highlight that we disagree with:

- 10 days is too short of time to respond to a letter from DHHS.
- The Fiscal Note on this bill is high, couple that with the amount of Federal benefits the State of Iowa will lose once implemented, will limit the amount of tax dollars that come back to the state of Iowa that can help our local economies.

This bill will deter eligible Iowans from applying for SNAP and will continue to stretch the capacity of Food Banks and Communities requiring us to raise money and support those who need. Government has a role and a responsibility to assist when they can, we need to work together to find solutions to feeding people in our state and utilize Federal Government resources when they are available. As we strive to maximize Government resources available to our state first, then food banks and food pantries will Close the Meal Gap and ensure those food insecure have access to food. Isn't working together to feed people the most basic thing we can do?