



[www.labudget.org](http://www.labudget.org)

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February 4, 2010

The Honorable Kristy H. Nichols  
Secretary  
Department of Social Services  
627 North 4<sup>th</sup> Street  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70802

The Honorable Angele Davis  
Commissioner  
Division of Administration  
1201 N. Third Street, Suite 7-210  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70802

Dear Secretary Nichols and Commissioner Davis:

The FY 2010 Department of Defense Appropriation provides \$400 million in new federal money for state food stamp administrative costs. Louisiana's share is \$7.4 million, based on estimates by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. The Louisiana Budget Project and Kingsley House strongly urge the state to use that money to provide additional resources to the food stamp program to ensure applicants do not have to wait for interviews and applications are reviewed expeditiously.

In Louisiana, like in every other state, food stamp case loads are increasing. From FY 2008 to FY 2009, the total number of food stamp recipients grew from 7,576,498 to 8,056,704, an increase of 6.3%. The situation continues to worsen. In the first half of FY 2010, the total number of food stamp recipients was 4,573,021, an increase of 619,606, or 15.7%, from the comparable period last year. Reflecting declining family incomes, the size of the benefit provided food stamp recipients increased from an average of \$120.42 per recipient to \$134.81.

From the above, it is clear that the additional federal funds for handling this increased caseload are a welcome addition to the state budget, and it is critical that they be used in the manner intended by Congress. From the House Appropriations Committee web site, the purpose is for "provid[ing] \$400 million in additional funding for state administrative expenses, to speed up processing applications."

In response to the deepest recession since the Great Depression, the federal government has provided states with significant additional resources to reduce the recession's impact on citizens, particularly vulnerable populations. Included in this stimulus money have been funds to increase food stamp benefits and to help states pay the higher administrative costs associated with increased case loads. Last year, however, Louisiana chose to use this increase in federal funds to offset



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cuts in state funds rather than providing additional resources to this vital program.

Ensuring that Louisiana citizens eligible for food stamp benefits receive those benefits in a timely manner not only benefits the recipients, it also is a highly effective stimulus to Louisiana's economy by increasing business to grocery stores and other local businesses. Delaying these benefits can increase food insecurity, put more pressure on already stretched charities, and undermine economic stimulus.

Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ed Ashworth".

Edward Ashworth  
Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Keith Liederman".

Keith Liederman, Ph.D  
Executive Director

cc: Governor Bobby Jindal  
House Committee on Appropriations  
Senate Finance Committee  
Joint Legislative Committee on the Budget  
House Committee on Health and Welfare  
Senate Health and Welfare Committee