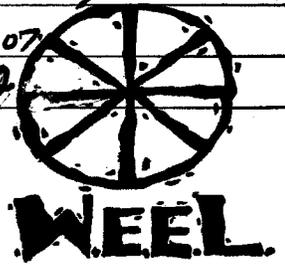


Exhibit No. 2Date 3-21-07Bill No. HB 782

March 21, 2007

HB 782 - Revise Law on Over-Payment of Food Stamps

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee,

My name is Susan Kidd and I am here as a representative of WEEL. I support HB 782.

WEEL is an organization made up of low-income Montana families and our supporters. I am the grassroots organizer and also provide advocacy. I receive calls from low-income folks who have a crisis within the public assistance system. I listen to their story, research the issue, the policies, and figure out what went wrong. I work with the low-income person to fix the problem, request fair hearings, and speak out about the issue and explain how it affected them and their family.

Sometimes my advocacies are isolated incidents that can be resolved, but many times I find that there are trends, areas of the system that can clearly work better for low-income Montanans. Over-issuance of food stamps because of case worker error is something that I am seeing more and more of. I would like to share a couple of testimonies of two families living in the Gods Love shelter who could not be here today.

I yield my time to a WEEL member who has so kindly taken time off of work to drive over from Missoula and tell you her story.

Thank you and I urge a due pass on HB 782.

Susan Kidd

495-0497

skidd@weelempowers.org

HB 782

Sponsor: Mary Caferro

March 21, 2007

Support for HB 782

To Whom It May Concern:

I have had this problem happen to me twice. The Office of Public Assistance makes the mistake of giving my family and I more food Stamps than we're suppose to receive so they would send us a letter in the mail saying they would either take ten percent of our food stamps or we could pay them money to pay it back.

I don't feel that people that are already struggling should have to pay back something that wasn't their mistake to begin with. I feel the state should have to worry about their mistakes, not anyone else.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Clemo

HB 782

Sponsor: Mary Caferro

March 21, 2007

Support for HB 782

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Maria and I have a family of four. In the past eight years, I've been on Food Stamps off and on. And twice I've received an overpayment. It was over \$50. For every month that I received Food Stamps they would take part of them to pay back the overpayment. And then another time I got a letter stating there was still an overpayment when I went back on Food Stamps, so they kept deducting from our food stamps until it was paid off. This was really hard because our family works hard but we don't make much money, so this just made it harder for us.

Thank you,

Maria Newman

House Bill 782: An act prohibiting DPHHS from requiring repayment of Food Stamps due to department error.

Sponsor: Mary Caferro

March 21, 2007

Testimony of: Kristin Best

Program Manager for God's Love Family Transitional Center

kbest67@bresnan.net

594-4834

Dear Chairman & Members of the Committee:

I strongly support the passage of this bill. I have talked with many families who have experienced this problem, often more than once while on Food Stamps. They later receive a letter from Office of Public Assistance (OPA) stating that they were overpaid the previous month and will have certain percentages deducted from their future monthly Food Stamp allotment.

This is obviously a repetitive flaw in the system that continues to go on unchecked and unchanged, yet the ones feeling the tightest pinch are the clients who are supposed to be served by this program. Families who are already living on less than enough don't have the luxury of back up financial resources to pay for bills and groceries when they are unexpectedly required to make do with \$10-40 less a month in Food Stamps until the amount is repaid. Nor should they have to. This amount may seem minor to most, but to a family struggling to get by on \$7.00-8.00 an hour, this is a very significant amount. This also adds to the stress of already being poor and already wondering how the other bills will get paid.

From an ethical perspective, the current system unwittingly "blames the victim" even though the mistake is clearly not theirs. We really need to give these families a break. This bill rightfully places ownership and accountability on the shoulders of the department, and provides families using Food Stamps with fair and just legislation that protects their "food security" interests.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony and I ask that you reflect on the merit and integrity of this bill and how it will support Montana's most needy families.

Sincerely,

Kristin Best