



Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing
In support of H.1290 and S.761 An Act to streamline access to critical public health
and safety-net programs through common applications
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H.1290 and S.761 would allow a simultaneous application for or renewal of the federally-funded Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps) and MassHealth or the Medicare Savings Program. These bills also regulate the sharing of information to qualify an applicant or recipient for benefits. In addition, a common application portal is to be created by the relevant executive offices so that applicants for SNAP, MassHealth coverage, income supports under Chapters 117A and 118, veterans services benefits, child care subsidies, housing subsidies, fuel assistance and other needs-based benefits can simultaneously apply and be notified of their eligibility for all these benefits.

Many recipients of SNAP and MassHealth would benefit by being enrolled in the other program. It is estimated that over 700,000 individuals who are MassHealth recipients and likely eligible for SNAP are not receiving those benefits. In many cases people who don't have the funds for nutritious foods suffer worse health outcomes, leading to higher health care costs for the state. Similarly, persons who receive SNAP are often also eligible for MassHealth or the Medicare Savings Program. They and the Commonwealth would benefit if they received regular health care and medical guidance instead of responding primarily to emergencies. One application for both food and medical benefits would simplify the process for beneficiaries and should streamline their eligibility certification. More SNAP dollars coming into Massachusetts would also be advantageous to local economies, particularly in those communities with high-concentrations of low-income residents.

There are many other safety-net benefits currently administered by the Commonwealth that persons with modest resources need and are entitled to. Often the application process is complicated because there are different forms to fill out, different proofs of eligibility needed and different offices to visit. It can be too expensive and too time-consuming for many residents to make numerous applications, so they never receive those benefits. H.1290 and S.761 have a very sensible solution – one application online for all the safety-net benefits. Not only would this be helpful for future beneficiaries, it should cut costs and bureaucracy for the Commonwealth to eliminate scattered offices and personnel that currently take and verify applications. It is past time for this technology-savvy state to provide a one-stop system that residents can use to access benefits.

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts supports these bills because of its long-standing national positions on Meeting Basic Human Needs. “Persons who are unable to work, whose earnings are inadequate, or for whom jobs are not available have the right to an income and/or services sufficient to meet their basic needs for food, shelter, and access to health care.” Also, “Eligibility of all low-income individuals for assistance should be based on need. Eligibility



should be established through simplified procedures such as a declaration of need, spot-checked in a manner similar to that used in checking the validity of income tax returns.”

The 47 local chapters of the League across Massachusetts urge your support for H.1290 and S.761. We ask the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing to consider the merits very seriously and report these bills favorably. Please do all that you can to gain enactment of common applications this session.