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## **Governor Rejects Call to Increase Funding for State's Anti-Hunger Program**

**HARRISBURG, Pa.** --- Gov. Tom Corbett's proposed 2014-15 budget rejects the recommendation of more than 1,200 organizations for increased funding for the State Food Purchase Program (SFPP), one of the commonwealth's most important tools in the fight against hunger.

"We're terribly disappointed by this budget --- and especially concerned about how we'll be able to maintain the level of services that we provide to a growing number of people who are turning to our food banks for help," said Sheila Christopher, executive director of Hunger-Free Pennsylvania. "This budget ignores the enormous pressure on our food assistance providers and the challenges facing the Pennsylvanians who rely on them."

SFPP is a critical lifeline for food banks across Pennsylvania. It provides cash grants to counties for the purchase and distribution of food to low-income individuals. But the program has seen an effective 24 percent funding cut since 2007. This includes a 7 percent cut in direct appropriations plus a 16.7 percent decline in purchasing power due to inflation, according to the Consumer Price Index.

The governor's proposed budget effectively flat-funds SFPP at \$17.338 million. If funding simply kept pace with food prices, the program would need \$24.6 million just to break even.

In November, 1,240 hunger relief organizations, religious congregations, student groups, human service agencies and other charitable organizations signed a letter asking the governor to increase SFPP funding to \$21 million. All 67 counties were represented among the signatories. Since then, another 700 anti-hunger advocates sent e-mails directly to the governor's office seeking the increase.

According to the 2009-11 American Community Survey three-year estimates, more than 2.6 million Pennsylvanians now qualify for assistance through programs like SFPP, which is administered by the state Department of Agriculture.

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**Hunger-Free Pennsylvania** comprises a network of food banks, food pantries, soup kitchens, homeless shelters, charities and other hunger relief organizations working together to end hunger in Pennsylvania. The network has 21 members serving all 67 counties. Learn more about Hunger-Free Pennsylvania online: [www.hungerfreepa.org](http://www.hungerfreepa.org), or via Facebook: [www.facebook.com/HungerFreePA](https://www.facebook.com/HungerFreePA).