

**Testifying for The National Commission on Hunger
NVAND Federal Legislative Representative's Report
Public Hearing, July 14, 2015**

This Commission was created by legislative mandate in the Omnibus Appropriations Bill of 2014. Commission members are tasked with a mandate to effectively use existing programs and funds to address domestic hunger and food insecurity; and reduce the need for government nutrition assistance programs, while protecting the safety net for the most vulnerable members of society. The Commission is tasked with submitting its recommendations to Congress and the Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture by October 2015. Commission members were appointed by leaders in the House and the Senate to ensure that the work would be bi-partisan. Commission members are serving on a voluntary basis. There are ten members with Susan Calvert Finn representing AND.

When Shirley Scraffold, President of NVAND, asked if I was interested in attending this hearing, I responded sure. She then asked if I was interested in testifying; I responded that if I could tell about my work with my church's food pantry, working in nutrition and being a dietitian of course. I signed up on line to testify and when July 14th came; I took off for Marbury Plaza Apartments located in South East Washington, D.C.. The hearing was held in the lower level of this apartment complex in the community room.

After the introductions of each of the commissioners, there were three presentations of 20 minutes with a question and answer period, then the public testimony. The first speaker was Audrey Rowe, the Administrator for the Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. She asked for continued support of SNAP, school meals including breakfast and summer feeding for children. She said that USDA was piloting employment and training career paths and rural issues. They were also looking at public, private partnership.

The next speaker was Tracy Wareing Evans, the Director of the American Public Human Services Association. She wanted to look at the neuroscience behavior of engagement of families, for those who used SNAP and those who did not. She was also asking for the stream lining of SNAP benefits with a focus on compliance. She wanted services to be offered at grocery stores such as nutrition education or get more benefit if buy healthy option nutrition dense foods.

George Jones, the Chief Executive Officer, Bread for the City was the last speaker. He wanted the Commission to address issues for SNAP such as a need for a fixed address. He wanted someone to look at that only 1-2 people will pay into Social Security; for every white man in prison; there are 6 black men and what effect this has on family especially when there is emphasis on having the male in the house hold. The Commission toured his program and had lunch with him.

Then we got to the public testimony. There were 45 persons signed up to offer comments. Each was allowed 5 minutes without questions. Of the 45, about 5 did not show, 5 were personal stories of being hungry, not having funds for rent let alone food as single moms with responsibility for young children. The rest were folks like me who are there representing their program. They all supported maintaining current funding levels for all the various programs which offer food especially SNAP, school feeding programs and summer feeding programs, Meals-on-Wheels and WIC. DC Food Bank and Central Kitchen had several speakers talk about all of their feeding and training programs.

Now to me. I went second to last. By that time, we were down to speaking three minutes each. Of the commissioners who were left, they appeared interested in my amended comments (See attached). What was said was recorded and you could submit your written comments which I did.

It was interesting to learn that the public wants the federal programs which are in place. I also learned that there are no restrictions for what is bought with SNAP like WIC and Virginia does not participate in Communities Supplemental Feeding Program. The concept of hunger is a very complex problem. It affects many people directly and indirectly. The presenters at this hearing were vocal, emotional and offered a wide variety of innovations. It is not too late to have your voice heard.

Respectfully Submitted;

Cindy

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