



**OPPOSITION STATEMENT AND RATIONALE AGAINST
House Bill 161, Amendment 1 (Rose)
April 5, 2011**

PLEASE OPPOSE HB 161, Amendment 1 (Rose)

Should photo I.D. be required to buy a gallon of milk?

HB 161 would require that the head of a SNAP household (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-formerly food stamps) have his/her picture on the face of the Link card. It also allows for the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) to suggest a process that would authorize a caregiver of a Link cardholder to use the Link card on the cardholder's behalf. HB 161, Amendment 1 would undermine the goal of SNAP by making it more difficult for families to put food on the table.

Why you should oppose HB 161, Amendment 1 (Rose)

HB 161, Amendment 1 would prevent 1 million SNAP household members from accessing benefits and increases stigma associated with SNAP:

- The bill only allows for the head of household (and an authorized caregiver) to use the Link card, meaning that a husband or wife, brother, sister, or children in the SNAP household would not be authorized to shop at the grocery store with the Link card if the head of household is working or at school.
- A photo ID on the face of the Link card would serve as a further deterrent for many people who are income-eligible for SNAP but already hesitant to seek government assistance due to embarrassment or shame.
- HB 161 would especially hurt seniors and people with disabilities who would need to go into local offices to have their pictures taken. Additionally, seniors and people with disabilities have multiple caretakers/family members who care for them. Each caretaker would have access to the Link card, which would increase the chance for misuse of SNAP benefits.

HB161, Amendment 1 would cost \$2-\$4 million and would be an administrative nightmare:

- IDHS would have to take photos of 850,000 heads of SNAP households. According to DHS the HB 161, Amendment 1 would cost \$2-\$4 million because "the DHS Family & Community Resource Centers (FCRCs) would need to issue the cards with the photos, and the Link contractor agree to discontinue mailing cards, for which they are reimbursed. Since about two-thirds of the approximately 60,000 monthly cards are mailed, this would place a major burden on the FCRCs and result in new costs for staff and equipment. Additional equipment would have to be installed in each local field office, including camera, software, and printers; other incurred costs would be for the cards themselves, system changes, and changes with the contractor."
- In the midst of a budget crisis, is requiring a mother or father to take a photo ID in order to shop at the grocery store to put food on the table for their family really the best use of tax payer dollars?
- In the age of "online not in line," this bill would create more traffic in IDHS offices. Rather than simply mailing the Link card, the head of household would have to come in to the office to have a picture taken. In already over-crowded waiting rooms and with some local offices that have SNAP caseloads of 3000 per worker, do we really need to create yet another line in an IDHS office?

HB161, Amendment 1 would not prevent SNAP/food stamp trafficking (fraud):

- Electronic Benefits Technology (EBT) has greatly reduced the minimal amount of Link trafficking that exists by reducing it from 3.5% to 1.0% over the last 10 years. SNAP trafficking happens because retail stores allow it to happen at the point-of-sale by exchanging SNAP benefits for cash instead of food. The photo ID will not prevent fraudulent Link transactions between the retail store and the Link cardholder.
- Provisions in the 2008 Farm Bill have already sought to address fraud by imposing stiffer penalties on retailers engaging in SNAP trafficking. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) will receive authority in September 2011 to impose monetary sanctions on retailers engaging in SNAP trafficking, in addition to disqualifying the retailer from accepting SNAP benefits. FNS has also implemented new technology that allows them to monitor retailers more closely to detect SNAP trafficking patterns.
- The SNAP payment error rate is currently at a record low and has declined 56% over the past 11 years. The SNAP payment error rate is different from Link trafficking. SNAP eligibility guidelines are complex and case loads are at an all time high, which at times results in underpayments or overpayments of benefits from DHS to SNAP households. HB 161 does not address the error rate and in fact pulls resources away from DHS that might otherwise be used to reduce the SNAP payment error rate even further.

Please support millions of low-income families in Illinois and join with the 26 organizations listed below in opposing HB 161, Amendment 1.

Organizations that also Oppose House Bill 161, Amendment 1

Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry
Illinois Hunger Coalition
Feeding Illinois
Greater Chicago Food Depository
Illinois Retail Merchants Association
Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
American Civil Liberties Union
AIDS Foundation of Illinois
City of Chicago
Eastern Illinois Foodbank
Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights
Illinois Action for Children
Illinois Association for the Education of Young Children
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Illinois Maternal and Child Health Coalition
Illinois Public Health Association
Lutheran Advocacy of Illinois
Lutheran Social Services of Illinois
National Association of Social Workers
Ounce of Prevention Fund
Project IRENE
Protestants for the Common Good
Planned Parenthood
River Bend Food Bank
Service Employees International Union Healthcare Illinois
Voices for Illinois Children

Position drafted by Diane Doherty, Illinois Hunger Coalition