



State of Connecticut

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SENATOR KEVIN KELLY
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Commissioner Roderick L. Bremby
Connecticut Department of Social Services
25 Sigourney Street
Hartford, CT 06106-5033

June 5, 2012

Dear Commissioner Bremby,

After reading a recent news report by Brian Lockhart in *The Connecticut Post* on the continued discovery of fraud during an audit by the Department of Social Services (DSS), I respectfully request that you widen this audit to include all recipients of the Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Aid Program (D-SNAP) benefits and accelerate the installation of a modern computer system to ensure that eligibility standards are met and improve its reliability after a series of major crashes.

In the aftermath of Tropical Storm Irene, there were 25,750 applications for D-SNAP benefits. In total, about 23,750 applicants were given benefits between \$700 and \$1,200. With long lines and an overburdened application system, many were concerned over the possibility of fraud.

After a preliminary investigation of state employees who received D-SNAP benefits, the Malloy administration announced in March that 27 employees were fired, 10 employees had retired and five employees resigned. These 42 former state employees may potentially face criminal charges as well. It was also announced that 685 state employees were cleared and 86 cases remain pending.

During this period, the DSS also announced that it would begin auditing other applicants. Last week, the results of this investigation were released. Of the 406 D-SNAP recipients who were audited, it was found that 171 were found to be ineligible for program benefits. As a result, the rate of fraud stands at 42.5% in this audit.

When the same percentage is applied to the full number of 23,750 recipients, it would mean that potentially 10,094 individuals received benefits they were not entitled to. If this is true, and assuming an average benefit of \$900, it would mean that \$9,084,600.00 in benefits were granted improperly, which reduces the actual amount of assistance available for families in need. We simply cannot continue to allow this improper activity to break the public trust.

Ultimately, we must upgrade the seriously deficient eligibility management system (EMS) so that we may detect program error sooner and provide high quality service to state residents. Dating to the 1980s, this computer system is outdated and must be replaced as soon as possible. With 90% of the funding for this upgrade coming from the federal government, what are we waiting for?

Unfortunately, I understand the modernization planning group will not meet until sometime this fall. While six positions have been included in the state's enacted budget to begin the procurement process, we must do more to accelerate the implementation of this modernized system. If another system failure occurs, how can we ensure that those who rely on these important benefits will be able to receive them?

I want to make sure that my concerns over widespread program error and the outdated computer system are seriously addressed.

As always, if I can be of any help or further assistance in solving these issues, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin C. Kelly". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'K'.

Kevin C. Kelly
State Senator – 21st District