



## The Public Advocate for the City of New York

*Improving Access to City Services*

**Betsy Gotbaum**  
Public Advocate

March 5, 2009

Governor David Paterson  
New York State Capitol  
Executive Chamber  
Albany, New York 12224

**Via Facsimile and U.S. Mail**

Dear Governor Paterson:

We are writing to urge you to accept a statewide provision in President Obama's economic stimulus package that would extend Food Stamp benefits for able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) through September 30, 2010. This provision would allow ABAWDs who live in New York State to continue to receive Food Stamp benefits as they actively seek work. As you know, New York City, as a locality with high unemployment, had previously been eligible for a waiver to extend the time limit for ABAWDs receiving food stamps, but the Bloomberg administration has consistently refused to accept this waiver. By accepting the ABAWD provision of the federal recovery bill, you could prevent the mayor from making the same mistake at a time when more New Yorkers are likely to need food assistance while they look for work.

Accepting this provision will also bring more federal dollars into New York City's local economy. A recent Moody's analysis, found that Food Stamps provide the most bang for the government buck in stimulating the economy: for every dollar the government spends on Food Stamps it produces \$1.73 in gross domestic product. By comparison, other options, such as increased spending on infrastructure (1.59), the refundable lump-sum tax rebates (1.22), and making the Bush tax cuts permanent (0.31), were less cost effective.

The office of the Public Advocate estimates, based on available information, that the value to New York City of extending the time limit for ABAWDs receiving food stamps could be roughly \$155 million, an opportunity the city will lose if it is allowed to refuse this provision of the economic stimulus package.

As you know, ABAWDs are eligible to receive Food Stamps for only three months in a three-year period. In this economy, however, it is particularly challenging for unemployed adults to find a job in only three months. The ABAWD provision of the stimulus would suspend the three-month limit for applicants, while they actively search for work, through September 2010. In New York City alone, there are 47,000 ABAWDs currently receiving Food Stamps who would benefit from this provision. According to published reports, approximately 14,000 additional ABAWDs in New York City would have access to Food Stamps if the three-month limit were extended.



The economic crisis and the consequent increase in unemployment have affected the entire state, and New York City is no exception. You have a long history of supporting the most vulnerable New Yorkers. With this in mind, we urge you again to help protect New Yorkers across the city and state from hunger and food insecurity by accepting the statewide ABAWD provision of the federal recovery bill.

Sincerely,



Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum



Comptroller William C. Thompson



Councilmember Bill de Blasio



Councilmember Eric Gioia



Joel Berg, Executive Director,  
New York City Coalition Against Hunger