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Commissioner Jennifer Velez
NJ Department of Human Services
222 South Warren Street
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Commissioner Velez,

As the Chair of the Assembly Human Services Committee, I frequently hear from individuals across the State of New Jersey regarding the difficulties they experience accessing critical social services. Over the years I have heard time and again that many constituents are delayed a variety of social services at the county level due to outdated technology slowing, or outright halting their access.

This is not a new problem, and I know DHS is well aware of the consequences. Currently, the State of New Jersey ranks 52nd out of the 53 state agencies that administer SNAP. For those applying for SNAP benefits, more than one out of every four individuals in need does not even get an answer from New Jersey within the 30 days required by federal law. As a result, the state is in jeopardy of losing federal funding for administrative expenses due to our poor timeliness record.

The good news is that one way to provide counties with the tools they need to better process SNAP applications, as well as other social service applications, is already within the power of DHS: implementation of CASS. As you know, CASS, which stands for Consolidated Assistance Support System, is the new social services information system that was designated to replace the current system that has been in operation since the mid-1980's. The bad news is while CASS was scheduled for implementation in October 2013, that step forward has yet to come to fruition. Consequently, the \$118.3 million investment from the State will be proven a waste if New Jersey loses federal funding for the exact problem CASS is supposed to fix.

In light of this, I respectfully request that DHS provide answers to the following questions:

1. What steps has the Department of Human Services taken to improve the timeliness rate of SNAP applications to ensure the State of New Jersey does not lose federal funding for administrative expenses?
2. Where is the Department of Human Services in implementing the CASS system?
3. What has caused this lengthy delay?
4. Does the Department expect there to be any additional expenses associated with the CASS system?

Sincerely,

Valerie Vainieri Huttle
Assemblywoman, District 37
Chair Assembly Human Services Committee