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DTA-The Grinch that Stole Christmas **5-10,000 Families in Massachusetts Cut of food stamps**

The winter has been cold and blustery since the new regulations at the Department new of Transitional Assistance (DTA) took effect this week, which required almost 50% of families to have a picture I.D. on the EBT card. These new regulations were passed in July 2013 and were partially implemented on December 1, 2013.

"DTA rushed implementing these regulations and the outcome for families is illegal, immoral and unethical disaster on DTA's part", states Lori Cairns of the Grace Team.

Mothers and fathers wheeled baby carriages or carried babies with siblings in tow up the steep hill to 9 Walnut St. in Worcester, the regional DTA office. The scene at the Worcester DTA office on Friday, December 16th included children crying, mothers sick with desperation as they wondered how they were going to feed their children.

Many heads of households work part time jobs, have disabled children or are disabled themselves. By Monday, December 16th, they were asked to wait for 2-3 hours to resolve their EBT card issue. An elderly disabled man states "I was told to go to the DTA office in Worcester in order to get my foodstamps, even though I was exempt from the new regulations", stated James Callihan from Worcester. Other disabled individuals came to the office, with oxygen tanks, canes, and caregivers because they have been cut off from foodstamps.

"Folks who've had to take jobs at places like Wal-Mart qualify for food stamps - and need them to feed their families," "When they take off work to wait at the DTA office they're risking their jobs. It's a gut-wrenching choice no one should have to make!" states Chris Horton of the Worcester Unemployment Action Group.

People at the DTA office reported that phones at DTA are jammed. The welfare office has been overcrowded with people for days. Some people reported that grocery stores had turned them away because their EBT cards have been de-activated. Outreach volunteers report massive confusion at the DTA offices throughout the state.

"We are deeply concerned about the ongoing denial of food – food families had every right to and expectation of." Grace Ross pointed out, "There is little hope that the Commissioner of DTA can resolve this widespread crisis quickly enough to prevent families from further serious harm – real hunger especially dangerous for children, elders and disabled and dangerous for anyone if they are also exposed to this week's temperatures."

When it's a choice of loosing their job, or eating, EBT cardholders reported they would choose the job. "Determined, strong women are not going to settle for a life of government assistance," one woman stated as she abruptly turned around and walked away. She fought the tears and quickened her pace so she would not be late returning to work.