

Pat Taylor
Testimony before the
United States Senate Special Committee on Aging
July 12, 2017

Chairman Collins, Ranking Member Casey, and Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to testify today. It is an honor to be here.

My name is Patricia Ann Taylor. I am 72 years old and a resident of Penn Hills, Pennsylvania.

I am married to the love of my life, James, who is 79 years old. This past April we celebrated 51 wonderful years together. We have 5 biological children, 2 of my daughters, Dawn and Toni, have joined me here today, both who are employed and volunteer at our Food Pantry. James and I also adopted 5 boys with special needs.

We have always had a full house. We are a close-knit family, I love having my 10 children, 15 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren around us.

My husband and I have always worked to support our large and boisterous family. James was self-employed, an owner of a beer distributor and laundromat. I have held various positions in the healthcare sector at times having to work 2 jobs. It was not always easy to put food on the table and pay our bills, but we managed somehow. My husband has always had a strong work ethic and always believed that he should be the provider for his family.

As we have gotten older, our health care costs have taken up a greater share of the bills, and we were forced to struggle because of our healthcare expenses. My husband has beaten prostate cancer, survived two heart attacks, is insulin dependent diabetic, has blood clots in both lungs and has been fighting blindness due to diabetic neuropathy. I have beaten breast cancer, had back surgery, total right knee replacement, I have Multiple Sclerosis, which is now in remission and heart disease.

It was not easy to ask for help with our food expenses. When talking with other adults in our age bracket, we learned about a food pantry in our neighborhood, the Lincoln Park Community Center, which is run by Joyce Davis. This center serves over 600 needy families monthly, and seniors such as ourselves, receive a Senior Food Box once a month. The help that Ms. Davis provides to my husband and I has truly been a blessing.

Because of the Senior Food Box that we receive through the Lincoln Park Community Center we do not have to decide between paying for our medication and putting nutritious food on the table. Ms. Davis serves so many needy families that have come to the Lincoln Park Community Center.

She also serves over 100 people at a local Senior Center and over 75 at another food pantry. Her services, as you can see by the number of needy families that come to these centers, shows the need in just our community. She has definitely been an asset to our community by how efficient, organized and successful her food pantry is. And, she tells me that the federal support she receives for this work is essential.

Neither my husband nor I ever dreamed that we would come to rely upon the senior food box. We were hard-working adults and we saved for our retirement. At times I even worked two jobs. Before the senior box, I noticed that I was not purchasing as much food that would help keep us healthy. It started a vicious cycle that I knew was not good for our health.

Things changed when I started receiving the senior food box. Last month, I received canned fruit and vegetables, spaghetti sauce, cereal, dry milk, cheese, pasta, peanut butter, and canned chicken.

I can supplement these items with groceries like, fish, meat, fruits, vegetables, ensure, and boost. With those items that I receive from the senior food box, I can make many creative dishes. Last month I was able to make chicken salad, spaghetti, grilled fish, and baked chicken. These are nutritious meals for me and my husband. The senior food box stretches our groceries and our budget. I am especially appreciative of the senior food box because it helps my family afford ensure and boost, which my husband needs to drink due to his loss of appetite caused by health issues and medications.

When Senator Casey's office called me to talk about my experience with the senior food box, I said that I would do anything to help support nutrition programs that benefit seniors, and that is how I wound up in this chair.

The senior food box has been a god-send to me and James. I strongly urge you to support senior food box programs, food banks, and other programs that help people like me. I urge you to help spread the word that programs like the senior food boxes are available. And, I hope that people will be able to continue to receive the senior box.

Again, thank you for the invitation to testify before the Committee. I look forward to answering your questions.

Thank you,

Pat Taylor