



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Daniel L. Squadron

Squadron, De Blasio, Advocates Rally for Passage of Bill to End Food Stamp Finger Imaging

[Daniel L. Squadron](#)

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Squadron Legislation to Come to Senate Committee Vote on Tuesday as Governor, Electeds Continue Fight to End Practice

NEW YORK – Today, State Senator Daniel Squadron and Public Advocate Bill de Blasio joined advocates and elected officials to rally in support of passage of Senator Squadron's legislation to end the practice of finger imaging food stamp recipients, ahead of a committee vote on Tuesday.

New York City and the state of Arizona remain the only two places in the United States that use finger imaging to determine eligibility for food stamp assistance.

Senator Squadron's legislation (S740/A5303), sponsored in the Assembly by Assemblymember Keith Wright, would end the counterproductive practice that has cost New York taxpayer dollars and deterred eligible families from accessing the federally-funded food stamp program. An Empire Justice Center analysis found that, between January 2009 and July 2010, 5,958 households were denied or cut off from food stamp benefits because they did not comply with finger imaging requirements.

The legislation is on the agenda of the Senate Social Services Committee on Tuesday.

This January, in his State of the State, Governor Cuomo came out strongly against the practice and is committed to ending it throughout New York.

"Finger imaging deters those in need from accessing federally-funded food stamps and, simply put, that makes no sense, " said **Senator Daniel Squadron**. "By spending our dollars to cut down on the number of people who access food stamps, finger imaging is a double-whammy: hurting local families *and* our local economy. It's time for New York to line up with the rest of the nation and end this counterproductive practice once and for all. Behind the leadership of Governor Cuomo, Public Advocate De Blasio, Speaker Quinn, and all those here today, I urge my colleagues in the Senate to pass this bill."

"We have children in New York City going to bed hungry because of the Bloomberg Administration's ideological hang-up. If the Mayor won't end this inhumane practice, we need State action to force his hand," said **Public Advocate Bill de Blasio**. "I applaud Senator Squadron for pushing forward legislation to ban fingerprinting for food stamps. It is long past time for New York City to join the rest of the country and stop punishing families in need."

"Finger imaging is so ineffective, such a waste of money, and such an impediment to food stamp access that even Governor Rick Perry eliminated it in Texas, and now only Arizona and New York City still cling to this discredited process," said **Joel Berg, executive director of the New York City Coalition Against Hunger**. "I thank Senator Squadron and Governor Cuomo for their leadership on this issue. They clearly understand that 48 other states have developed far more effective ways to detect or deter fraud while still enabling eligible families to obtain the nutrition assistance they need."

"Requiring food stamp applicants to submit to finger imaging in order to receive benefits is unnecessary, costly, punitive, and prevents thousands of qualified New Yorkers from receiving the much needed assistance that they need to feed themselves and their families," said **Council Speaker Christine C. Quinn**.

"Removing this barrier will improve access to this vital service for the very people who need it the most, and remove New York from the company of Arizona, the only other state requiring fingerprinting for food stamps."

"I want to commend Senator Squadron for introducing this legislation, which will eliminate the cruel and inexcusable policy of forcing those desperate for food stamps to be fingerprinted," said **Senator Tom Duane**. "New York is a family, and like any family, it should go out of its way assist those who need help the most -- not treat them like common criminals. There is absolutely no evidence that applicants subjected to this humiliating, discriminatory and counterproductive policy are perpetrating fraud to a greater extent than the general public -- quite the opposite. 'Defrauding' the government is the last thing on someone's mind when he or she is desperate to put food on the table. In fact, this dreadful policy might actually deter people from applying for assistance, denying their children and themselves nutritious food. This is unacceptable and we will continue the fight to end this shameful practice."

"In the face of a tough economy, more New Yorkers than ever need access to benefits like food stamps," said **Senator Liz Krueger**. "Requiring New Yorkers to submit their fingerprints stigmatizes the food stamp program, and prevents vital federal money from flowing into our state and putting food on the tables of seniors, families, and children. New York is the only major city in the country that still engages in this cruel, pointless practice -- let's end it now."

"I stood up and applauded when the Governor announced during his State of the State address that he would ensure that New York City end the practice of fingerprinting individuals who are applying for food stamps," said **Senator Gustavo Rivera**. "There is no reason for fingerprinting New Yorkers who are applying for food stamps, all it accomplishes is creating a situation that makes individuals afraid to get help and consequently, makes it harder for them to feed their family and their children."

"With so many New York families struggling right now, we must do everything we can to ensure that vital services like food stamps are delivered to those who need it

without unnecessary obstacles or deterrents,” said **Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver**. “Requiring food stamp recipients to undergo fingerprinting is demeaning to the people who are seeking assistance and does nothing to substantially combat fraud. No one in our city should go hungry and those who need help must be treated with compassion and dignity.”

“I am pleased to join with thousands of New Yorkers in supporting legislation authored by State Senator Daniel Squadron and Assembly Member Keith Wright that would end the practice of fingerprinting food stamp recipients in New York City,” said **Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer**. “At a time when so many New Yorkers are struggling to make ends meet, it is shameful that our City--along with the state of Arizona--are the only jurisdictions left in this nation that still require such identification procedures. This ill-advised policy has little or no impact on rooting out fraud and unfairly stigmatizes hard-working people who need to put food on the table for their families. We should follow Governor Andrew Cuomo's lead and expand--not constrict--our distribution of food stamps, so the families who deserve this help can receive it, and get back on their feet as soon as possible.”

“I applaud Senator Squadron for legislation that will eliminate a senseless barrier that, for too long, has prevented qualified New Yorkers from receiving the assistance they need to feed themselves and their families,” said **Council General Welfare Chair Annabel Palma**. “Passage of this bill will be an enormous victory for New Yorkers in need, and for all those who have fought to put an end to the detrimental practice of finger imaging food stamp applicants.”

“I want to thank Senator Squadron for introducing this important bill to end finger print requirements for food stamp recipients,” said **Council member Margaret Chin**. “We must ensure that the food stamp program is responsibly implemented and that it reaches those who need it most. Finger printing is a unnecessary barrier that makes needy families feel like criminals for getting the assistance they need.”

“Citizens' Committee for Children strongly supports S740 as it would eliminate NYC's harmful finger imaging requirement,” said **Louise Feld, Policy Associate for Food and Economic Security at the Citizens' Committee for Children**. “At a time when so many are struggling to put food on their tables, it is essential that eligible New Yorkers can apply for needed food assistance with ease and without stigma.”

"Thousands of households are denied SNAP each year due to the fingerprinting requirement, but in the vast majority of these cases, the denials are made in error", said **Cathy Roberts, Senior Paralegal at Empire Justice Center** and co-author of [Time to Leave Fingerprints Behind](#), an analysis of food stamp fingerprinting in New York State. "These improper denials affect frail homebound elderly individuals, people with severe disabilities and families with children. We need immediate action to end fingerprinting in New York State."

"FPWA supports the elimination of finger imaging for all households who receive public benefits and we support this bill as a significant step in eliminating the finger imaging requirement that only serves to deter eligible households that are in need of assistance," said **Liz Accles, Senior Policy Analyst for Early Childhood Education and Income Security at the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies**. "It is time for New York State to eliminate the use of this expensive, ineffective and punitive process."

"On behalf of older New Yorkers in need of food stamps, we call upon the state legislature and Governor Cuomo to eliminate the requirement for finger printing," said **Bobbie Sackman, Director of Public Policy at the Council of Senior Centers and Services**. "We appreciate the Governor's leadership to eliminate finger printing and Senator Squadron's initiative to do likewise. No obstacle should be placed in the way of any New Yorker accessing food."

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