

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

May 24, 2006

The Honorable Rick Perry
Governor of Texas
P.O. Box 12428
Austin, Texas 78711-0001

Dear Governor Perry:

As you know, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission announced recently that state employees would immediately replace Accenture in processing applications for Food Stamps, Medicaid and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. This decision came after persistent and troubling reports that Accenture was not providing the same level of service that state employees did. The number of children enrolled in the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and Medicaid has decreased immensely.

We are concerned that the quality of service constituents Accenture has been providing falls far short of the service a staffed office would provide. Many times, a resident may need a face-to-face interview, especially with the elderly and those who might have language or other communication barriers. In addition, the navigation of call centers can be very difficult – a fact which has unfortunately played out with the decreased number of enrollees for these assistance programs since Accenture has taken over.

We believe assisting families with nutrition and healthcare is not an expense; it is an investment in our community. The face-to-face assistance provided by state employees cannot be substituted with an internet transaction or a phone call. Moreover, staffed locations have well trained eligibility employees who are knowledgeable in other resources that might help those seeking assistance.

It is important to note that employees working with the food stamp office have received enhanced funding bonuses from the federal government for the years 1998-2004 totaling \$152 million. These bonuses were for better than 95% accuracy and timeliness on the Food Stamp program.

A recent Center for Public Policy Priorities study reported some disturbing findings:

- Children enrolled in Medicaid, which had grown steadily since 2000, dropped by nearly 79,000 from November to February, and parents covered declined by about 10,000. Children in CHIP dropped by another 21,000 from December through March.