

## Office of the Special Master

### Gemmell v. Hawkins, C. A. No. 16-650 WES

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#### ORDER

WHEREAS, on November 2, 2017, the Court entered an Order appointing a Special Master to develop and recommend a corrective action plan to ensure the timely processing of SNAP applications; and

WHEREAS the Order, in particular paragraph IV.A.4 thereof, gives the Special Master authority to issue orders concerning steps that the Department of Human Services (“DHS”) should take to ensure compliance with the Stipulation and Order of Settlement; and

WHEREAS the Special Master has met with the parties and has issued four reports containing his findings and recommendations in this matter; and

WHEREAS, as noted in the Reports, the DHS Call Center in Pawtucket for SNAP (and other applications) has wait times that are unacceptable, frustrate applicants with questions, and hinder the timely processing of applications; and

WHEREAS the Special Master has determined that it is necessary to accelerate the addition of staffing assistance at the Call Center and related back office functions in order to promote the timeliness of processing of SNAP applications as soon as possible.

#### IT IS HEREBY ORDERED AS FOLLOWS:

1. Defendant Courtney Hawkins, in her capacity as Director of DHS, shall contract forthwith with an outside vendor for supplemental staff experienced in activities supporting the

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administration of public assistance benefits to support the Call Center and back office functions relating to SANP applications.

2. Defendant shall obtain any federal approvals that may be necessary as soon as possible.

3. Upon the signing of a contract with an outside vendor, Defendant shall require the vendor to exercise its obligations under the contract and begin work immediately.

4. The initial term for use of the outside vendor shall be no less than 120 days. Prior to the expiration of 120 days, the Special Master shall review the situation and determine if another term is necessary, and, if so, shall determine the length of an additional term for the outside vendor.

5. At any time prior to the expiration of 120 days, Defendant may request that the Special Master amend this Order.

Executed this 2<sup>nd</sup> day of March, 2018

/s/ Deming E. Sherman

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Special Master

cc Counsel of Record (by email)