



# MIKE ROHRKASTE

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 55<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

## Assembly Bill 501

Relating to: FoodShare healthy eating incentive pilot program and making an appropriation

Testimony of State Representative Mike Rohrkaste

Assembly Committee on Public Benefit Reform

October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017

Thank you, Chair Krug and members of the Assembly Committee on Public Benefit Reform, for holding this public hearing on Assembly Bill 501.

Engaging in healthy eating habits is common practice to many Wisconsinites. Thousands of us do it every day, some because of the health benefits, and others because we may receive incentives to do so through our health insurance companies or workplace wellness programs. We know that eating healthy reduces our chances of chronic diseases and helps to keep our bodies fit. But, for many Wisconsinites, especially those on FoodShare, eating healthy isn't necessarily an option. This legislation creates a pilot program that seeks to target FoodShare recipients with discounts and promotions for fresh produce and other healthy foods with the goal of incentivizing them to make healthier choices.

The pilot program will serve 2000 eligible, voluntary FoodShare recipients in both urban and rural Wisconsin to receive discounts on purchases of fresh produce and other healthy food options at participating retailers. Volunteers for the program could receive a healthy eating card or other coupon option that would provide them with options for discounts on healthy products. The participant would present the card or coupon at checkout and would automatically receive a discount on any food included in the program.

Using a "carrot" approach, this legislation seeks to incentivize those on FoodShare benefits to purchase fresh produce and other healthy foods that they may not regularly buy. In addition, the bill requires DHS to contract with an independent research entity to conduct a study that will analyze the pilot and how it affects food purchases and the health of participants. With this study, we will be able to determine whether incentives such as discounts and promotions do actually affect the choices that consumers are making. If so, further legislation would have the ability to give those on FoodShare the ability to become healthier through the purchase of healthy foods and lower their risk for long-term chronic diseases.

Thank you for your time, and I encourage members of the committee to support Assembly Bill 501. I am open to answering any questions that you may have.



## State Senator Sheila Harsdorf

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Date: October 17, 2017

To: Assembly Committee on Public Benefits and Reform

From: Senator Sheila Harsdorf

RE: AB 501 – relating to FoodShare healthy eating incentive pilot program and making an appropriation

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Dear Chair Krug and Committee Members:

Thank you for holding a public hearing on Assembly Bill 501 (AB 501) which seeks to create a pilot program for FoodShare eligible households to receive discounts on purchases of produce and other healthy food options.

It is well known that what we eat has an effect on our health. We encourage our kids to eat their vegetables and insurance companies provide incentives for engaging in healthy habits. We often hear about the challenges that those on FoodShare have in purchasing fresh produce. A USDA Nutrition Assistance Program Report shows, the most promising approaches to getting individuals to eat healthier, and thus have healthier outcomes, are to provide discounts and target merchandizing and concurrent promotions. AB 501 gets to the heart of this and creates an incentive for FoodShare recipients to make healthier choices.

This pilot program would provide 2000 FoodShare eligible households in both urban and rural Wisconsin with discounts on purchases of produce and other healthy food options at participating retailers. Participants would be able to take advantage of 50% off on produce as well as various discounts on other healthy food products. Voluntary participants would receive a healthy eating card, access to a mobile app and website, and weekly emails for that week's discounts. The healthy eating card is presented to the cashier at checkout and any foods available for discounts would be automatically deducted from the total at the time of sale.

In addition, AB 501 directs DHS to contract with an independent research entity to conduct a study that will analyze the efficacy of the pilot in affecting food purchases and the overall health of the participating families.

This pilot will enable us to test a group of volunteers on FoodShare to determine if encouraging the purchase of healthy foods can result in better eating habits and healthier outcomes.

I urge your support and prompt action on this legislation. Thank you! I welcome the opportunity to answer any question you may have.

**Testimony of State Senator Lena C. Taylor**  
**Assembly Committee on Public Benefit Reform**  
**Assembly Bill 501**  
**October 17, 2017**

Chairman Krug, Members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to submit written testimony on Assembly Bill 501, the FoodShare Healthy Eating Incentive Pilot Program. Access to healthy nutrition is crucial toward creating healthy communities. Unfortunately, a large barrier to healthy foods is cost. This is especially true for FoodShare clients who are low-income.

This bill will help address barriers to healthy nutrition and is an investment in Wisconsin's future. According to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, 13.3 percent of Wisconsinites rely on FoodShare to supplement their nutrition needs. Of those receiving FoodShare, 43 percent of clients are children and 40 percent of all assistance groups contain a minor. It is no secret that healthy eating today is an investment in a healthier you tomorrow. This is especially true for children, who are at risk of developing costly and life-changing health afflictions such as coronary heart disease, obesity, and diabetes from inadequate and poor nutrition.

Not only will this bill have significant impact for our children, it will have implications for Wisconsin taxpayers. First, the bill targets populations who are most at risk of unhealthy eating. Far too often, those with low incomes will choose cheaper or more convenient fast foods to accommodate their budget and hectic work schedules. By making healthier foods cost less to FoodShare recipients, we can encourage these individuals to eat healthier, resulting in cost savings in health services in the present and future. Second, the bill requires this pilot to be evidence-based through an independent researcher. This researcher will help identify trends and quantify outcomes so we know that taxpayer dollars are used efficiently and effectively.

Chairman Krug, Members of the Committee, thank you again for allowing me to opportunity to speak on this important bill. I am excited for the results of this pilot and its potential impact on children and families across the state. I ask for your support on Assembly Bill 501.

Thank you for your support and for your attention.



Healthy Kids Collaborative



TO: Members of the Assembly Committee on Public Benefit Reform  
 FROM: American Heart Association American Stroke Association, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, Hunger Task Force, Feeding Wisconsin, The School Nutrition Association of Wisconsin, Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, American Family Children's Hospital, UW Health, Healthy Kids Collaborative, REAP Food Group, Wisconsin Association of Local Health Departments and Boards, Wisconsin Public Health Association, SSM Health, Sixteenth Street Community Health Centers  
 DATE: October 17, 2017  
 RE: Support for Assembly Bill 501, the Healthy Eating Incentives FoodShare Pilot

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Representative Rohrkaste and Senator Harsdorf have authored Assembly Bill 501 and Senate Bill 416, also known as the Healthy Eating Incentives FoodShare Pilot. We are writing today to express our support for this initiative. This pilot program will encourage and incentivize FoodShare recipients participating in the pilot to purchase more produce, which could have a positive impact on their diets and overall health.

Our organizations believe this legislation takes positive steps in helping to address hunger, food insecurity and the multiple health-related issues that stem from these. We all know the important impact that a healthy diet and lifestyle play in combating chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, and diabetes. It is therefore important to ensure that the healthy choice is the easy choice for Wisconsin citizens.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP – formerly Food Stamps) has been vital in addressing food insecurity and nutrition in the United States for more than 50 years. The program has an impact on health, educational attainment, and economic self-sufficiency.<sup>i</sup> Because of this, it is necessary to protect funding and access for the program, while at the same time addressing diet quality. In qualitative research by Leung et al., 82% of survey respondents supported providing additional benefits to SNAP participants that can be used to purchase only healthful foods.<sup>ii</sup> Your support of this pilot program would achieve this.

The proposed pilot program would also provide the opportunity to potentially assess the outcome of fruit and vegetable incentive purchasing to evaluate the effects on consumer purchasing, healthy food consumption, short-term health outcomes, and retailer implementation.

By creating a healthy eating incentive pilot program for FoodShare recipients in both urban and rural areas and studying this program, the state of Wisconsin is showing a commitment to fighting hunger while encouraging healthy diets and food purchasing habits.

We thank you for your time, look forward to engaging in this pilot program, and encourage you to support this legislation. If you have questions, please contact Ben Van Pelt with the American Heart Association at [Ben.VanPelt@heart.org](mailto:Ben.VanPelt@heart.org) or 815-474-3973.

<sup>i</sup> Executive Office of the President of the United States. Long-term benefits of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. December 2015. Accessed online October 21, 2016 at [https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/documents/SNAP\\_report\\_final\\_nonembargo.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/documents/SNAP_report_final_nonembargo.pdf).

<sup>ii</sup> Leung CW, Ding EL, Catalano PJ, Villamor E, Rimm EB, Willett WC. Dietary intake and dietary quality of low-income adults in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 2012 Nov; 96(5):977-88.



October 16, 2017

To whom it may concern:

I would like to voice my strong support for the FoodShare Incentive Pilot Program. As a pediatrician and specialist in childhood obesity, the words of former Robert Wood Johnson President and CEO, Risa Lavizzo Mourey - "The choices people make depend on the choices they have." - ring very clearly to me. Today in Wisconsin, nearly 20% of children are overweight or obese (Wisconsin Department of Health Services (2012-2014)), and we now know that excess weight and low physical activity during childhood predicts significant morbidity and reduced quality of life during later life. Every day, I care for children already suffering medical consequences (e.g. type 2 diabetes, fatty liver) of limited food choices necessitated by lack of access to and/or higher cost of healthy nutrition. We live in a country where the inflation adjusted cost of fresh fruits and vegetables has risen nearly 40% in the past 20 years while the cost of a can of Coke has declined by more than 20% (Wallinga, D., Schoonover, H., & Muller, M. (2009), Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition, 4(1), 3-19). We live in a community where there are 5 times as many fast food restaurants as there are grocery stores (Dane County Data: 85.85 fast food restaurants per 100,000 residents; 16.39 grocery stores per 100,000 residents). Given the multitude of environmental barriers to eating well, it is no wonder that only 9% of kids are eating the recommended 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables every day (2012 Dane County Youth Assessment: 9.2% of youth in our community are eating 5 or more servings of fruits and veggies a day).

Initiatives such as the FoodShare Incentive are critical steps toward improving the odds for healthy living for so many of my pediatric patients and their families. It is a duty for all of us to provide all children with a healthy nutrition and physical activity environment, and the FoodShare Incentive truly changes the choices that are available - particularly for children at highest risk for obesity and its complications. Consequently, I strongly urge you to support the FoodShare Incentive Pilot Program and to please reach out to me if you would like to explore other ways we can work together with our communities to change the odds of our citizens living healthy lives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David B. Allen MD".

David B. Allen MD  
Founding physician and Co-Chair, Dane County Healthy Kids Collaborative  
Professor of Pediatrics  
Head of Endocrinology and Diabetes  
UW American Family Children's Hospital - Madison



**Assembly Committee on Public Benefit Reform**  
Testimony of Scott Nordstrand, General Counsel, Solutran, Inc.  
October 17, 2017

**Introduction**

Good Morning. My name is Scott Nordstrand. I am the General Counsel of Solutran, Inc., a company headquartered in Minneapolis, Minnesota. I live in Somerset, Wisconsin.

I want to thank the Public Benefit Reform Committee for the opportunity to testify in support of Assembly Bill 501 and the FoodShare healthy eating incentive pilot that it proposes. AB 501 was recently introduced by Representative Rohrkaste and presently has 15 co-authors in the Assembly and 10 co-sponsors in the Senate. Its Senate companion bill, SB 416, was introduced by Senator Harsdorf and has similar support.

Today, I would like to introduce you to Solutran's Healthy Savings technology and how it could facilitate the FoodShare pilot program in AB 501.

**Solutran Background**

Solutran is in the business of processing financial transactions for public and private clients. Our core products include government EBT, WIC food instrument processing, electronic check processing for large retailers and our Healthy Savings technology.

**Healthy Savings Technology**

Our Healthy Savings program utilizes a bar-coded card and key fob, printed page or smart-phone display to provide participants with a means of receiving discounted pricing on healthy food products and fresh produce.

It provides real-time electronic discounts, a mobile app (with push notifications), website and weekly email reminders that effectively “trigger” better food choices.

We believe this technology can motivate FoodShare participants to eat healthier.

### **Pilot**

The 10-month pilot proposed by AB 501 will provide 2,000 FoodShare participants with access to 50% off fresh produce, up to \$10 per week, and 20% off other healthy branded foods.

The one-time, \$425,000 GPR request provides funds for produce payments to retailers and a study of the pilot outcome.

If Solutran is selected by the Department of Health Services to conduct this pilot, we will cover all the administrative costs of the pilot, including card distribution, program management, electronic messaging, branded product discounts and financial reconciliation.

Why should we try this?

### **BadgerCare+**

First, we are what we eat. In the long run, healthier eating means healthier people.

Wisconsin's current BadgerCare+ and Medicaid expense is approximately \$6 billion a year in State funds.

Many FoodShare recipients are also on State-funded BadgerCare+ and Medicaid, so improvements in their health will go directly to the State's bottom line.

### **Better Food Choices**

Second, there is an understandable concern about unhealthy foods purchased with government funds. The question is: how do we convince folks to take home a bag of apples? We believe you need to make it a good deal. And every FoodShare dollar spent on produce is a dollar not spent on unhealthy food.

### **Branded Discounts**

Third, our discounts on branded healthy foods offer needed savings to those with the least to spend. No SNAP program in the nation leverages free food manufacturer discounts to make these government funds go farther. And we do it electronically, right at the point of sale.

### **Wisconsin Food Manufacturers**

Fourth, our focus on Wisconsin food manufacturers for branded discounts makes it a win-win. We will promote the purchase of Wisconsin grown and manufactured products to FoodShare participants spending over \$1 billion in our grocery and convenience stores every year.

### **Building Upon Governor Walker's FoodShare Reforms**

Fifth, we believe that this innovative, positive motivation for healthier eating builds upon Governor Walker's other FoodShare initiatives and efforts to increase workforce readiness. This program can help move people from government dependence to true independence by making them healthier.

### **Solutran Advantages**

Finally, Healthy Savings is a proven program. 2.3 million Healthy Savings cards have already been issued in Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota, Illinois and Indiana. It will soon roll out in New York, New Jersey, Virginia and DC.

Large health insurers already provide it to their Wisconsin plan members. We have a strong and growing Wisconsin retailer network, including Pick 'n Save, Copps, Metro Markets, Woodman's and Marketplace Foods. More retailers are coming soon. Most recently, Kwik Trip is working to join and has endorsed this pilot.

### **Wisconsin Can Be First**

This is the first program in the nation to offer a simple, effective way to encourage healthier eating by SNAP recipients. Being first means taking a chance on a new idea. In this case, that means making a one-time investment to test the concept in a pilot. We believe this can be the first step in transforming FoodShare and ensuring a healthier Wisconsin.

I would be glad to answer any questions that you may have.





## FOODSHARE PILOT

### AB 501/SB 416

[WWW.MYHEALTHYSAVINGS.COM](http://WWW.MYHEALTHYSAVINGS.COM)



#### SIMPLE, HEALTHY MOTIVATION

The 10-month pilot will provide 2,000 FoodShare participants with access to 50% off fresh produce, up to \$10 per week. Plus 20% off other healthy branded foods.



#### ONE-TIME FUNDING

The one-time, \$425,000 GPR request for the pilot provides funds only for the fresh produce payments to retailers and a third-party study of the pilot outcome.



#### SOLUTRAN COMMITMENT

Solutran, creator of Healthy Savings technology, will fund all other elements of the pilot, including card distribution, program management, electronic messaging, branded product discounts and financial reconciliation.

## HEALTHY SAVINGS ADVANTAGES

Healthy Savings is the first program in the nation that allows SNAP recipients to receive discounts on fresh produce and healthy branded foods across retailer networks.

- Real-time electronic discounts, a mobile app, website and weekly email reminders that effectively “trigger” better food choices.
- Innovative, positive motivation for healthier eating supports Governor Walker’s FoodShare initiatives.
- No development costs—Healthy Savings is up and running in Wisconsin.
- 2.3 million Healthy Savings cards already issued in WI, MN, ND, IL and IN.
- Wisconsin retailers include Pick ‘n Save, Copps & Metro Markets, Woodman’s & Marketplace Foods. More retailers coming soon.

## BEYOND A SUCCESSFUL PILOT

- ✔ Provide Healthy Savings benefits to all 700,000+ FoodShare participants.
- ✔ Long-term funding using portion of \$1 billion+ annual federal funding for FoodShare.
- ✔ Reduced BadgerCare+ (Medicaid) costs.
- ✔ Increased workforce readiness.
- ✔ Partnerships with Wisconsin food manufacturers for discounts on healthy foods promote Wisconsin products.
- ✔ Move people from government dependence to true independence using “the carrot, not the stick”.

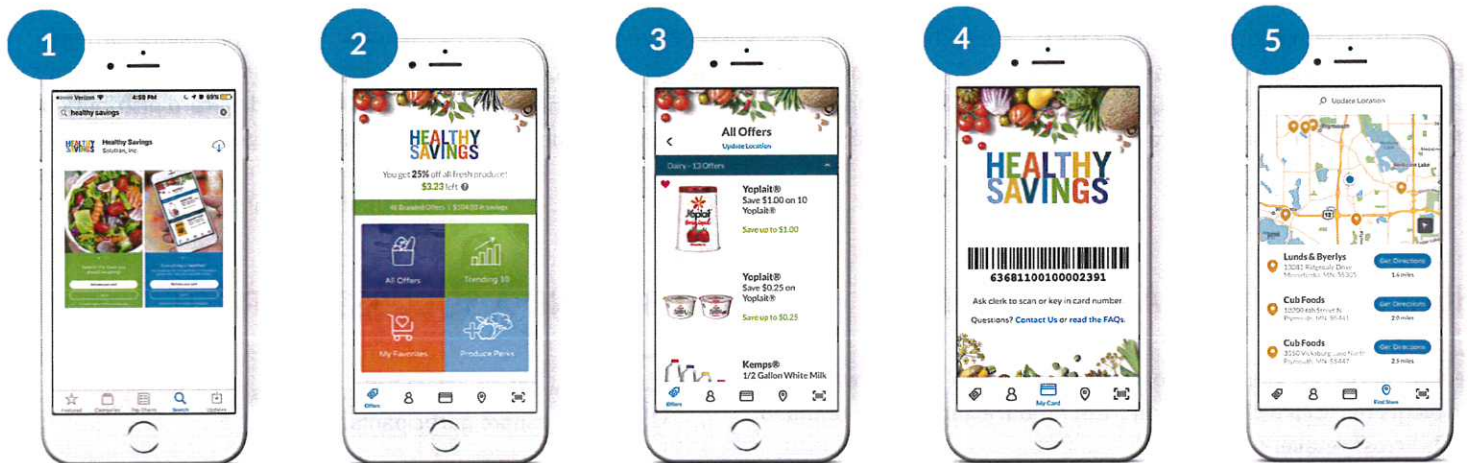
# HEALTHY SAVINGS®

## HEALTHY SAVINGS MOBILE APP GUIDE



### Start Saving Smarter

With intelligent list options and personalized messages, the Healthy Savings mobile app makes it even easier to save on healthier foods and find participating stores. Follow the instructions below and download the new Healthy Savings mobile app today in the App Store or Google Play.



1 Go to the App Store or Google Play, search for Healthy Savings and download the app

2 Launch the app, and select from four customizable lists

3 View product details by tapping on the offer. Swipe left or right to favorite or hide items

4 Tap "My Card" to access the mobile barcode that can be used at checkout

5 To search for available retailers, tap "Find Store"



## Credit Operations

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# Kwik Trip Supports Healthy Savings for FoodShare

## REQUEST

Kwik Trip, Inc. (Kwik Trip) respectfully requests that funding for the Healthy Savings for FoodShare pilot be added to the 2017-19 biennial budget.

## PILOT

Solutran, Inc. (Solutran) has developed and deployed a new technology called the Healthy Savings that encourages healthy eating choices among its participants in Wisconsin and other Midwestern states.

Solutran now proposes to bring this innovative program to Wisconsin FoodShare, initially in a pilot program to 2000 participants for 12 months. In this first-in-the nation program, FoodShare participants will:

1. Purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at 50% off, up to \$10 per week in value; and
2. Receive discounts averaging 20% on a wide variety of other healthy foods, all funded by the food manufacturers themselves.

Solutran has offered to cover all the program costs for the pilot, except the actual reimbursement to retailers for the discounts on fresh produce and the cost of a third-party studying the outcome of the pilot. The budget request for these costs is \$500,000.

## ROLLOUT

If the pilot demonstrates that Healthy Savings for FoodShare participants eat healthier, the benefits to the participants and the State of Wisconsin could include:

- Reduced BadgerCare+ (Medicaid) costs;
- Increased workforce readiness;
- Promotion of healthy foods from Wisconsin food manufacturers; and
- Partnerships with key Wisconsin food retailers.

## **OUR MISSION**

*To serve our customers and community more effectively than anyone else by treating our customers, co-workers and suppliers as we, personally, would like to be treated, and to make a difference in someone's life.*



In a statewide rollout, Wisconsin would seek a waiver from the Food & Nutrition Service to use a small portion of the \$1 billion+ annual federal funding of FoodShare for a fresh produce matching fund. Wisconsin be the first state in the nation encourage healthy food choices by FoodShare participants and do so using existing federal funds.

**KWIK TRIP SUPPORT**

Kwik Trip is a recognized leader in the convenience store industry at encouraging healthy eating. Our extensive offerings in fresh produce, healthy branded products and healthy prepared foods are unrivaled. We believe that the combination of Kwik Trip's commitment to healthy foods and our broad geographic presence in Wisconsin makes us a natural partner with Healthy Savings for FoodShare. Kwik Trip is presently working with Solutran to determine the resources required and the timing for integrating this technology into our stores.

We believe this program could be a great benefit to FoodShare and the State of Wisconsin. If you have any questions, please give me a call.

Sincerely,



Steve Loehr

Vice President of Support Operations

608-793-6286



Woodman's Food Market - 2631 Liberty Ln, Janesville, WI, 53545

April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2017

Greetings,

Woodman's Markets supports the Healthy Savings program and is currently implementing the Healthy Savings technology across all of our stores.

Healthy eating and making healthier foods more affordable to the communities we serve is important to us. We support the proposed funding for the Wisconsin FoodShare Healthy Savings pilot. The idea of providing Foodshare participants of 50% off produce up to \$10.00 per week and additional discounts on healthy foods is a wonderful opportunity to promote healthy eating among FoodShare participants.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Clint Woodman", is written over the printed name.

Clint Woodman



Healthy Kids Collaborative



TO: Honorable Members of the Wisconsin State Legislature  
 FROM: American Heart Association American Stroke Association, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, Hunger Task Force, Feeding Wisconsin, The School Nutrition Association of Wisconsin, Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, American Family Children's Hospital, UW Health, Healthy Kids Collaborative, REAP Food Group, Wisconsin Association of Local Health Departments and Boards, Wisconsin Public Health Association  
 DATE: September 7, 2017  
 RE: Support for LRB 3638 & LRB 4217, the Healthy Eating Incentives FoodShare Pilot

Senator Harsdorf and Representative Rohrkaste recently circulated LRB 3638 and LRB 4217, also known as the Healthy Eating Incentives FoodShare Pilot. We are writing today to express our support and urge you to co-sponsor this initiative. This pilot program will encourage and incentivize FoodShare recipients participating in the pilot to purchase more produce, which could have a positive impact on their diets and overall health.

Our organizations believe this legislation takes positive steps in helping to address hunger, food insecurity and the multiple health-related issues that stem from these. We all know the important impact that a healthy diet and lifestyle play in combating chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, and diabetes. It is therefore important to ensure that the healthy choice is the easy choice for Wisconsin citizens.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP – formerly Food Stamps) has been vital in addressing food insecurity and nutrition in the United States for more than 50 years. The program has an impact on health, educational attainment, and economic self-sufficiency.<sup>i</sup> Because of this, it is necessary to protect funding and access for the program, while at the same time addressing diet quality. In qualitative research by Leung et al., 82% of survey respondents supported providing additional benefits to SNAP participants that can be used to purchase only healthful foods.<sup>ii</sup> Your support of this pilot program would achieve this.

The proposed pilot program would also provide the opportunity to potentially assess the outcome of fruit and vegetable incentive purchasing to evaluate the effects on consumer purchasing, healthy food consumption, short-term health outcomes, and retailer implementation.

By creating a healthy eating incentive pilot program for FoodShare recipients in both urban and rural areas and studying this program, the state of Wisconsin is showing a commitment to fighting hunger while encouraging healthy diets and food purchasing habits.

We thank you for your time, look forward to engaging in this pilot program, and encourage you to co-sponsor this legislation. If you have questions, please contact Ben Van Pelt with the American Heart Association at [Ben.VanPelt@heart.org](mailto:Ben.VanPelt@heart.org) or 815-474-3973.

<sup>i</sup> Executive Office of the President of the United States. Long-term benefits of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. December 2015. Accessed online October 21, 2016 at [https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/documents/SNAP\\_report\\_final\\_nonembargo.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/documents/SNAP_report_final_nonembargo.pdf).

<sup>ii</sup> Leung CW, Ding EL, Catalano PJ, Villamor E, Rimm EB, Willett WC. Dietary intake and dietary quality of low-income adults in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 2012 Nov; 96(5):977-88.

TO: Members of the Assembly Committee on Public Benefit Reform  
FROM: Nicholas Heckman, Policy Analyst, Public Health Madison and Dane County  
DATE: October 17, 2017  
RE: Assembly Bill 501: Healthy Eating Incentives FoodShare Pilot

According to the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), 10.7% of Wisconsin households from 2014-16 were food insecure, or lacking access to enough food for an active and healthy life.<sup>1</sup> There are many negative consequences of food insecurity, including increased likelihood of hospitalization, oral health problems, diabetes, and heart disease. School-age children in food insecurity families may have increased difficulty focusing, increased chances of developmental delays, and other behavioral issues.

One of the primary programs to provide assistance to food insecure families is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, known as FoodShare in Wisconsin), which serves as an anti-hunger and anti-poverty program for an average of over 680,000 individuals in Wisconsin each month. Many of these are children, seniors, and individuals with disabilities.<sup>2</sup> Nationwide, 44% of SNAP recipients are children while another 21% are adults who live with those children. Over 2/3 of all the benefits go to households with children.<sup>3</sup>

Research tells us that the diets of SNAP participants are similar to the diets of the low-income non-participating population and that access to SNAP benefits is associated with improved diet and weight.<sup>4</sup> Children in families with SNAP demonstrate gains in reading and math skills as well as overall health. So, while the program is currently working well to improve health and other outcomes for participants, nutrition incentive programs such as the one outlined in Assembly Bill 501 offer opportunities to further encourage healthy eating and expand families' local buying power for healthy fruits and vegetables.

In recent years, Public Health Madison and Dane County has contributed to two nutrition incentive programs similar to the one proposed by Assembly Bill 501, both to positive results. With support from a USDA Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive pilot grant, a local collaborative has been able to provide vouchers to be spent on healthy food when people use FoodShare benefits at farmers' markets and retail partners. Evaluation has demonstrated that the program has encouraged greater consumption of healthy food and an increased willingness to try new fruits and vegetables.

In our Fruit and Vegetable Prescription program, all patients at a clinic are screened for food insecurity, and those who express a need are connected with vouchers to spend on fruits and vegetables at a local retailer. This pilot is currently underway, but preliminary evaluation shows that people who use the program are very excited about it and are willing to commit to healthy eating long-term.

In general, these and other models of nutrition incentive programs offer innovative ways to address food insecurity while improving consumption of healthy foods and continuing to allow families to make choices that work best for them.

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<sup>1</sup> Prevalence of household-level food insecurity and very low food security, average 2014-16. US Department of Agriculture.

<sup>2</sup> Wisconsin Department of Health Services. FoodShare Wisconsin Data. Accessed November 2015 from [www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/foodshare](http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/foodshare).

<sup>3</sup> Gray et al. Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2015," (2016). USDA Food and Nutrition Service.

<sup>4</sup> Nguyen et al. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Food Insecurity, Dietary Quality, and Obesity Among US Adults. (2015). *American Journal of Public Health*.



# Survival Coalition

of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

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*P.O. Box 7222, Madison, Wisconsin 53707*

DATE: October 17, 2017

TO: Assembly Committee on Public Benefit Reform  
FR: The Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

RE: Support for Assembly Bill 501, FoodShare healthy eating incentive pilot program.

Chairperson Krug and Assembly Committee on Public Benefit Reform Members:

The Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations is comprised of over 30 statewide groups representing people with all disabilities and all ages, their family members, advocates and providers of disability services. We would like to voice our support for Assembly Bill 501, which provides discounts on healthy foods for individuals using FoodShare, and ask that you consider an amendment to this bill that would add an educational component to the pilot program.

FoodShare is an important program for people with disabilities. According to the Department of Health Services, 25% of FoodShare recipients are either elderly, blind, or have a disability; and 46% of households receiving FoodShare benefits contain at least one individual that is, either elderly, blind, or has a disability.<sup>1</sup>

The “Healthiest Wisconsin 2020” report prepared by the Department of Health Services found that in Wisconsin adults with a disability are more likely to be overweight or obese than adults without a disability.<sup>2</sup> This report found that 74% of Wisconsin adults with a disability were overweight or obese while 61% of adults without a disability were overweight or obese. However, it is important to note that individuals with disabilities are more likely to be overweight or obese for a variety of reasons, including: a lack of healthy food choices; difficulty chewing or swallowing; the use of medications that contribute to weight gain; physical limitations that make it difficult to exercise; a lack of accessible environments and several other factors.

In addition, a higher percentage of people with disabilities are of lower income and, therefore, more often live in “food deserts.” A “food desert” is an area with little or no access to large grocery stores that offer fresh, healthy and affordable foods. Instead of such stores, these urban

<sup>1</sup> Wisconsin Department of Health Services, “FoodShare Wisconsin At-A-Glance.” Accessed at: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/foodshare/fsataglance.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Wisconsin Department of Health Services, “Healthiest Wisconsin 2020 Baseline and Health Disparities Report.” Accessed at: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/hw2020/baseline.htm>



and rural areas often contain only fast food restaurants and convenience stores. Physical access to large grocery stores can be difficult for people with disabilities of low incomes, particularly if the stores are distant, the store is not on a bus line, or if the consumer has no vehicle. Carrying fresh food from grocers can also be a challenge for individuals who must take public transit, walk long distances, or have other physical limitations.

While there are many barriers that make it difficult for people with disabilities to access healthy foods and achieve good health, we believe that Assembly Bill 501 has the potential to reduce some of the financial barriers to purchasing healthy foods for people using FoodShare. We hope the Legislature will continue to address the other barriers to nutrition in Wisconsin and look for ways to promote physical activity in our communities. Along these lines, we hope you will consider adopting an amendment to Assembly Bill 501 that would add an educational component to this bill.

One of our member organizations, the Arc Wisconsin, has had success with a nutrition education and healthy eating program aimed at people with intellectual disabilities. Their HealthMatters curriculum focuses on healthy eating, portion control and physical activity. Of the 542 participants, 181 decreased their BMI and 145 decreased their blood pressure.

An educational component to this legislation would help connect FoodShare participants with local grocery stores and farmers' markets, provide participants with healthy recipes and provide training on cooking skills.

We ask that you support Assembly Bill 501 and adopt an amendment to add an educational component to this bill.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Survival Co-Chairs:

Maureen Ryan, [moryan@charter.net](mailto:moryan@charter.net); (608) 444-3842;  
Beth Swedeen, [beth.swedeen@wisconsin.gov](mailto:beth.swedeen@wisconsin.gov); (608) 266-1166;  
Kristin M. Kerschensteiner, [kitk@drwi.org](mailto:kitk@drwi.org); (608) 267-0214  
Lisa Pugh, [pugh@thearc.org](mailto:pugh@thearc.org); (608) 422-4250

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October 16, 2017

Chair Scott Krug and The Hon. Committee Members  
 The Assembly Committee on Public Benefits Reform  
 c/o: Hannah Gibbs, Committee Clerk  
 State Capitol  
 PO Box 8952  
 Madison, WI 53708

Re: AB 501 and AB 530

Dear Chair Krug and Committee Members:

We are writing to share our positions on the two bills – AB 501 and AB 530 – that will be heard in committee on October 17, 2017. Typically, we would submit separate letters but given the related nature of AB 501 and AB 530, we thought it would be useful to write about both of them together to compare and contrast these proposals aimed at increasing the purchase and consumption of healthful food in the FoodShare program.

Feeding Wisconsin is the state's association of the six regional Feeding America food banks. Together, through our food banks and their network of over 1,000 local food programs in every county of our state, we provided over 50 million meals to nearly 600,000 of our friends and neighbors in 2016. Our mission is to help our participating food banks, partners and stakeholders fight hunger, improve health, and strengthen communities.

Proper nutrition is key to good health and as hunger and food insecurity are essentially malnutrition problems due to the inability of people with low-incomes to access enough adequate, nutritious food, the idea at the core of both bills – how to help people with low-incomes eat more healthfully – should be lauded and promoted. Both AB 501 and AB 530 are pilot programs aimed to address this issue but each take a vastly different approach.

**We support AB 501 for its positive, incentive based approach toward healthy eating and we oppose AB 530 for setting a framework for creating restrictions in the FoodShare program.**

FoodShare is the Wisconsin name for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps), a federal nutrition assistance program that provides individuals and families living with low and no incomes with a modest monthly benefit (about \$110 per month, per person) to buy food at supermarkets, farmers markets, convenience stores, and megastores that sell groceries. These benefits are delivered on an EBT card and are strictly monitored by the state that administers the program, the federal government that authorizes the program and the major banks that facilitate the benefit delivery.

On a per calorie basis, healthy food costs more than less healthy, more calorically dense options. For many people, this is the key reason why eating healthfully on FoodShare is a challenge.

By implementing an incentive for healthy food purchases, as AB 501 aims to do, the state would not only increase the FoodShare benefit, addressing the core cost issue, but it would also target the increase at the healthy items in the produce section of supermarkets. This is an approach that has been proven to increase the consumption and spending on healthy food.



The Healthy Incentives Pilot (HIP) was a pilot program authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill and provided similar incentives for SNAP participants in Massachusetts from 2011 to 2012. The results were extremely encouraging. The study found that HIP participants consumed 26% more fresh fruits and vegetables and spent 11% more on these same products when compared to regular SNAP participants. The study and the final evaluation report can be found here: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/healthy-incentives-pilot-final-evaluation-report>

In contrast, AB 530 seeks to build a case for implementing restrictions in the FoodShare program by consulting with stakeholders and industry experts. Not only are restrictions ineffective at changing behavior, the restrictions that AB 530 would lead to could inadvertently increase the food costs for FoodShare participants due to the more expensive nature of healthy food items.

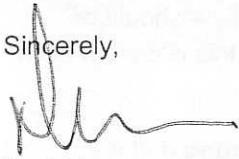
Additionally, by limiting FoodShare participant choices to a certain set of "healthy" items that have been created by a panel of "experts," the state would effectively be taking away the ability of moms and dads across our state to make the food choices that are right for them and their families and sending a message that the families on FoodShare are unfit to make these basic household decisions.

Numerous national studies have shown that FoodShare recipients' food purchasing and consumption patterns are just like non-recipients. Everyone makes sub-optimal food choices from time to time, not just the people on FoodShare. It's just that people who have low-incomes have less flexibility to avoid making poor food choices due to cost.

With limited resources to address the issue of healthy eating, the state should choose to more strategically invest public dollars to fund the healthy incentive pilot as proposed by AB 501. This type of positive intervention would incentivize healthy eating, address hunger, boost local economies, and begin to tackle the key issue that prevents people on FoodShare from eating more healthfully – cost.

Thank you for your time and careful consideration of our position on AB 501 and AB 530. Please do not hesitate to contact me at [dalee@feedingwi.org](mailto:dalee@feedingwi.org) or 608-960-4511 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



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October 17, 2017

To: Representative Krug, Chair  
Members, Assembly Committee on Public Benefit Reform

From: Lisa Pugh, Executive Director

RE: Assembly Bills 501; 530 - FoodShare

The Arc Wisconsin is a statewide organization that advocates for people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD). We have 15 Wisconsin chapters and are connected to a network of more than 650 chapters across the country. The Arc is the oldest and largest disability advocacy organization in the nation.

Assembly bills 501 and 530 would make changes to the FoodShare program that will have a significant impact on individuals with disabilities. Recent analysis by the Legislative Fiscal Bureau indicates 24 percent of program participants are elderly, blind, or disabled individuals. Forty percent of households receiving FoodShare benefits contain at least one individual that is, either elderly, blind, or has a disability.

Identifying ways to support good health for people with I/DD is essential. There are significant and concerning health disparities between people with I/DD and their peers without disabilities. "These include a lack of access to health care, an absence of healthy foods including fresh fruits and vegetables, and deficiencies in exercise and wellness activities. Research shows that 5% of adults with I/DD report overall poor health, a marked difference as compared to the 1% of adults without disabilities answering the same question. According to The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), adults with disabilities have a 57% higher rate of obesity than adults without disabilities and experience three times the risk of heart disease, diabetes, stroke, and cancer as compared to the general population."<sup>1</sup>

People with I/DD also do not have healthy eating habits - only 11 percent of people with I/DD report eating 5 or more servings of fruit or vegetables a day compared to 23 percent of the general population in our country. The reasons for this are quite complicated as we will explain further.

The Arc firmly believes that ignoring health disparities experienced by people with I/DD will not only exacerbate our inability to improve quality of life but also contribute to rising health care costs.

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<sup>1</sup> The Arc HealthMeet Assessment Results: <http://www.thearc.org/file/Health-Assessment-Years-1-3-Technical-Report-FINAL.pdf>

However, with regard to AB 501 and AB 530 we advise caution: Limiting an individual's food choices can be extremely problematic. People with disabilities often already have diet restrictions that limit their food choices for medical reasons. They also face many barriers to living a healthy lifestyle and food choice is just one of them:

People with I/DD struggle with:

- access to transportation
- limited finances
- lack of education about healthy eating and food preparation.

People with I/DD are also often not completely in control of their food purchases, choices and preparation as they depend on support professionals for many of these tasks.

A higher percentage of people with disabilities have lower incomes and, therefore have difficulty affording more expensive foods. They are more likely to live in "food deserts" with limited access to the type of grocery stores that offer fresh, healthy foods at affordable prices. Because many people with disabilities do not drive and rely on public transportation, this creates additional expenses and barriers if stores are distant or not on bus lines. **For these reasons, we oppose the restrictions put in place through AB 530, believing they ultimately will be harmful to people with disabilities.**

**Providing financial incentives for certain food purchases (as proposed through the AB 501 pilot), is a promising strategy, but may not result in sustainable change. If the Assembly goes the route of a pilot program in AB 501, The Arc Wisconsin strongly suggests adding an educational component.**

The Arc's recent investment in health education for people with I/DD has included use of an evidence-based program - *HealthMatters* - that has proven results. The program uses hands-on instruction for people with disabilities in everything from healthy food choices, to grocery shopping, food preparation and exercise. **We have found that without these educational supports to change habits for people with disabilities, simply addressing the costs of food is not enough.**

Currently The Arc Wisconsin has three local chapters - The Arc of Greater Columbia County, The Arc of Racine and The Arc Fond du Lac - each implementing this curriculum with co-horts of 45 individuals with disabilities to improve their health and track their outcomes. The Arc Racine will graduate a class of transition age youth in a few weeks.

A research report authored by The Arc of the United States followed more than 1700 people with I/DD who completed this training. People lost weight, improved their BMI, lowered blood pressure and, most importantly, reported making lifestyle changes. Three out of four participants (76%) reported using the information they learned to make healthier lifestyle choices.

Achieving the outcomes the Legislature desires with reforms to the FoodShare program should involve a comprehensive, respectful and thoughtful approach for the people with disabilities who depend upon the program. A pilot project offers the ability to experiment and get it right. We urge you to consider the significant barriers these individuals face in accessing healthy foods and the support they may need to live a healthier, higher quality life.