



ALEX JOERS

WISCONSIN STATE REPRESENTATIVE
79TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

**Testimony of Representative Alex Joers
Committee on Health, Aging and Long-Term Care
AB 1013: Healthy Food Incentive Program
January 31, 2024**

Chairman Moses and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for holding this public hearing on Assembly Bill 1013. As one of the authors, I appreciate the opportunity to testify in favor of this proposal to create a healthy food incentive program in Wisconsin.

I've been honored to join my colleagues over the past few months as a member of the Speaker's Task Force on Childhood Obesity. We traveled the state learning about the important work being done to encourage healthy lifestyles, particularly for our youth. One key topic we heard about throughout the hearings was access to healthy food options, and the success of local programs that this legislation was modeled after.

Healthy food incentive programs—also known as Double Dollars, Double Up Food Bucks, or Market Match—allow Wisconsinites participating in SNAP to utilize matching dollars exclusively for locally grown fruits and vegetables. Eligible retailers for these programs include farmers markets, grocery stores, and other healthy food vendors. For example, one program allows families that spend \$20 of SNAP at a participating farmers market to receive a matching \$20 through the program to spend on fruits and vegetables.

As mentioned, many programs already exist across the country in states like Ohio, Kentucky, and Michigan. In Wisconsin, we have several existing local programs, including in Wood, Brown, Milwaukee, Eau Claire, and Dane Counties. This legislation would allow us to expand these efforts, encouraging healthy food purchases across the state.

This legislation requires that priority must go to retailers that source primarily from Wisconsin farmers, so local agriculture will benefit. For example, research done on the existing program in the Green Bay area determined that the program resulted in \$29,000 of additional income for local farmers.

By incentivizing SNAP shopping at venues like farmers markets, we can also boost the local economy. Data from the Double Dollars program in Wood County shows that program recipients not only averaged \$23 spent at the market, but also averaged an additional \$54.21 spent at neighboring businesses during the same trip.

Now, how is the program funded? This bill would require no new appropriation to be implemented. Funding for the program is available through 2017 Act 266, which allocated \$425,000 for a pilot program with very similar goals. However, due to time constraints, the program was never implemented and the full amount remains in the created appropriation. This bill would enable access to those funds that were never expended, allowing them to be used towards a similar purpose.

The funding will also be used to seek matching funds through GusNIP, a US Department of Agriculture grant program that supports similar efforts around the country. This means our investment could have double the impact, with no new appropriation from the state.

Healthy food incentive programs offer the opportunity to support our farmers, families, and local economies. Please join me in supporting Assembly Bill 1013.



KAREN HURD
STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 68TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Assembly Bills 1013, 1014, 1015, and 1016
Public Testimony
Committee on Health, Aging and Long-Term Care
January 31, 2024

Thank you, Chair Moses, Vice-Chair Rozar, and committee members for hearing these bills related to Childhood Obesity.

On August 24, 2023, the Speaker created the Assembly Speaker's Task Force on Childhood Obesity and appointed me to serve as the task force's chair. The task force was directed to study childhood obesity and weight management. The task force was tasked with considering circumstances contributing to childhood obesity, including physical activity, nutrition, medical, and other root causes, and physical environment factors. The task force also reviewed current and past efforts to prevent and improve weight management in order to consider and build upon effective practices.

Following these efforts, the task force was directed to consider recommending legislation in the following areas:

- School-based efforts to impact circumstances contributing to childhood weight management.
- Parental support for and education on childhood weight management.
- Early interventions and screenings to better identify and promote healthy weight management.
- Removal of potential barriers and promotion of better access to proper nutrition, spaces for play, and other physical activities.
- Data collection efforts and implementation of childhood weight management interventions.

After the appointment of the seven additional members, the task force held six public meetings throughout the state for the purpose of receiving testimony and recommendations for legislation to address childhood obesity in Wisconsin.

We heard from many organizations and individuals throughout the state regarding the childhood obesity issue. Additionally, we solicited information from and conferred with the WI Department of Health Services, Department of Public Instruction, Department of Children and Families, and Department of Military Affairs. The National Conference of State Legislatures researchers also came to Madison to give testimony on the issue. The bills before you today arose from these hearings and subsequent discussions.

Childhood obesity is a problem in the state of Wisconsin. Ten percent of children age 2-5 years are obese; 15.2% ages 6-11 years; 17.9% ages 12-17 years, and obesity continues to increase as our citizens age until 47.1% of our Wisconsin population is obese by the age of 65 years (statistics supplied by WI Department of Health Services).

Support for AB1014 and AB1015:

Obesity in children is not caused by a singular reason or even a few specific reasons. The contributors to childhood obesity are many. Commonly, it is believed that poor dietary choices and lack of physical activity are the main causes of obesity. Certainly, these are contributors and can stand alone as a cause of obesity; however oftentimes, poor dietary choices and lack of physical exercise are symptoms of a more complex problem. For example, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and social determinants of health (SDOHs) can create stress which can lead a child (and a parent) to comfort himself/herself with poor dietary choices and to seek to escape their reality through activities that are not physically exerting—such as screen time. Almost all persons in Wisconsin, including children, are already aware that poor dietary choices and lack of exercise contribute to obesity. However, obesity continues to be a problem despite the education and knowledge of these two causes. Therefore, we must broaden our approach.

It is well recognized among experts in childhood obesity that the following are factors that are contributors/causes of childhood obesity (this list is not exhaustive):

- Poor prenatal health choices
- Postnatal lack of guidance for parents for their infants
- Lack of breastfeeding
- Lack of sleep
- High risk behaviors
- Lack of protective factors in the home
- Mental health issues (anxiety, depression, low life satisfaction)
- Violence in the home
- Substance use in the home
- Genetics
- Disabilities
- Health Disorders
- Medications
- Lack of access to healthy foods
- Lack of access to green spaces for physical activity
- Inability to analyze influences
- Inability to access valid and reliable information and resources
- Poor interpersonal communication
- Poor decision-making skills
- Lack of goal-setting
- Lack of self-management
- Lack of self-advocacy

Across the state of Wisconsin we have many programs that address childhood obesity. However, the programs are generally isolated and may only cover some of the aspects of the many factors that affect childhood obesity. It will take an expansion and/or scaling up of our current programs as well as new programs to come into existence to adequately and completely address the childhood obesity issue. We need a variety of programs that target the various factors of childhood obesity while at the same time addressing the specific demographic of the area in which the program is located.

AB 1014 and 1015 brings under one umbrella a method that can address all the contributing factors to childhood obesity by providing incentive through state grant funding for locale-specific childhood obesity measures to be implemented through organizations whose mission it is to assist with the childhood obesity problem. These organizations can be YMCAs, Family Resource Centers, schools, county governments, medical clinics, gyms, health centers, and more. Private matching funds or in-kind services are a requirement of obtaining a grant. The more support from the private industry that an organization can garner, the more likely the grant award and its subsequent renewal if the organization can show that its programming is effective.

AB 1014 and 1015 provide incentive and responsibility for the four entities involved in childhood obesity: 1) the child and his/her parent/guardian; 2) the organization providing the childhood obesity programming; 3) the private sector; and 4) the state of Wisconsin.

These two bills put the requirement of administering a \$5,000,000 grant program for the fiscal year 2024-2025 under the Department of Health Services.

AB 1013, making available DoubleBucks for SNAP recipients in the purchase of fruits and vegetables, and AB 1016 encouraging the physical activity of school children, I also support. The authors of these bills will give details. Collectively, these four bills will help Wisconsin lower childhood obesity rates which will impact positively not only our children, but the adults to which they will grow; and therefore, the health of our entire citizenry. All aspects of life improve in Wisconsin when we are a healthy population.

I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have.



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
ROBYN VINING
14TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT
WAUWATOSA • WEST ALLIS

Rep. Robyn Vining
Testimony in Support of Assembly Bills 1013, 1014, and 1015
January 31, 2024

To my esteemed colleagues of the Assembly Committee on Health, Aging and Long-Term Care,

I am sorry to not be with you today to testify in support of Assembly Bills 1013, 1014, and 1015, bills that received unanimous support from the members of the Speaker's Task Force on Childhood Health. Due to a surgery I had scheduled this week, I am unable to be with you in-person. Please understand my absence today is no reflection of lack of support for these bills, and should you wish to discuss these bills further, I will gladly speak with you by phone this week. Thank you for taking the time to consider this legislation to support childhood health.

Every child in Wisconsin deserves access to healthy food, and the opportunity to lead a healthy lifestyle filled with love and play. As the Vice-Chair of the Speaker's Task Force on Childhood Health, I had the privilege of hearing experts from across Wisconsin emphasize the significance of investing in Wisconsin's kids and giving families the resources they need to raise their kids in a healthy environment.

Assembly Bill 1013 doubles the purchasing power for Wisconsin families on federal food assistance when buying healthy, locally-grown produce. Assembly Bills 1014 and 1015 invest in grants to improve the health of children through community-specific initiatives. These bills empower communities across Wisconsin to invest in initiatives tailored to their unique needs. Assembly Bill 1016 also came out of the Task Force, but I did not co-sponsor and will not be testifying in favor of Assembly Bill 1016 because it remains unclear to what impact it will have on the health of Wisconsin students. I am willing to listen and understand if this is a bill worth supporting, and I ask you to join me with that same spirit of consideration.

Our goal is to unite in a shared purpose to better serve Wisconsin's kids, and make Wisconsin a place where all children—regardless of circumstance or background—can grow up safe, healthy, and happy. The health of our children is important to the future of our state, and these bills take meaningful steps toward ensuring Wisconsin's kids grow up healthy and happy.

I ask that you support Assembly Bills 1013, 1014, and 1015 in this committee and on the Assembly floor, so we can move Wisconsin forward, *together!*

Forward together,

Rep. Robyn Vining
Wisconsin State Representative
14th Assembly District



JOAN BALLWEG

STATE SENATOR · 14TH SENATE DISTRICT

**Assembly Bill 1013: Healthy Food Incentive Program
Assembly Committee on Health, Aging and Long-Term Care
Testimony of Senator Joan Ballweg
January 31, 2024**

Good morning, Chair Moses and members of the committee. Thank you for hearing this important piece of legislation.

This legislation is a product of the Speaker's Task Force on Childhood Obesity. I am glad to partner with Representative Joers and the members of this task force to use existing state money to encourage families to eat healthy, locally-grown, fresh food.

Assembly Bill 1013 establishes a Nutrition Incentive Program that will allow families to stretch their grocery budgets thus expanding access to fresh, healthy food. This program will be funded with \$425,000 of existing funds at the Department of Health Services. This legislation enables access to these existing funds and does not require a new appropriation.

Under this bill, families that participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) will be eligible for extra money to purchase fruits and vegetables at local grocery stores or farmers markets. These programs, which currently operate in other states, are sometimes referred to as Double Dollars, Double Up Food Bucks or Market Match. Families that receive SNAP benefits would be eligible for "double bucks" meaning that if they spend \$10 at a farmers market on fresh fruits and vegetables that they would receive an extra \$10 to spend on additional fresh food.

Enactment of this legislation would help accomplish one of the main objectives of the Speaker's Task Force on Childhood Obesity, to build healthy eating habits for youth in Wisconsin.

Thank you for your consideration of Assembly Bill 1013.



Contact: Connie Schulze
Director, Government
Affairs
104 King Street, STE 303
Madison, WI 53703
608/516-2552 mobile
cschulze@uwhealth.org

**Assembly Committee on Health, Aging and Long-Term Care
Testimony Provided by Annie Bockhop
Program Director, Community Relations and Diversity
Re: Support for AB1013**

Dear Chairperson Moses and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to join you today to express our support for Assembly Bill 1013 (AB1013) which is intended to enable the implementation of a statewide healthy food incentive program. I am Annie Bockhop, Program Director in Community Relations and Diversity at UW Health. I have had the pleasure of serving in this role for about seventeen years and during my tenure, I have seen many examples of food insecurity among our patients and partners in the communities we serve.

Food insecurity is a serious problem because of the downstream effects. It is defined by the USDA as when people don't have enough to eat and don't know where their next meal will come from. Millions of people, including children experience food insecurity every year. Often, their diet is based on nutrient-poor foods that are cheap, easily attainable alternatives to fruits and vegetables. This can contribute to significant health concerns such as obesity, heart disease, hypertension, and diabetes. But with your support, we can help stave off the negative effects of food insecurity and a poor diet. I'm referring to the benefits of a statewide, healthy food incentive program.

As evidence of that fact, I point to the successful local food incentive program, "Double Dollars" in Dane County. This program was established more than 10 years ago, and it allows participants to use a pre-set amount of FoodShare dollars, typically \$20 that can be stretched to \$40 if spent at a participating location such as a local farmer's market. That \$20 is matched or "doubled" at the market so people can buy more locally sourced meat, fruits, vegetables, and dairy products to support a healthier diet. UW Health was an early advocate for the program recognizing the potential health benefits for thousands of people. We believe these benefits will extend to the greater population of FoodShare participants in Wisconsin if this bill is passed by the legislature and signed by Governor Evers.

I'd like to extend our gratitude to the authors and co-sponsors of AB1013, including those on this committee, who are taking steps to address food insecurity in Wisconsin. The legislation before you is necessary to put the plan from 2017 Act 266 into action. While the 2023-24 legislative session is nearing a close, we hope leaders in the Assembly and Senate see fit to quickly move this legislation to a floor vote in each house. Doing so will put our state on par with other states that have established similar programs such as Ohio, Kentucky, and Michigan.

For these reasons, I ask you to join us in supporting AB1013. Thank you for your consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions from committee members at this time.

To Committee on Health Aging and Long-term Care

Thank you very much for holding a hearing on Assembly Bill 1013 and the opportunity to speak on the proposed healthy food incentive program. And for thank you for all those assembly members who co-signed support for the amendment as well.

My name is Andrew Hirst and I have the fortune of helping to manage and operate a county-wide nutrition incentive program with a community non-profit. With a background in food security and agriculture, the position attracted me to move here to the state and be part of such a great initiative and program here in Dane County, call the Double Dollars program. I love be able to apply my background to such an impactful program here in Dane County.

Nutrition Incentive programs, like this one proposed in the amendment, helps families stretch their grocery budget and prioritize buying locally grown foods. Through such a program, if an individual spends SNAP dollars at a participating farmers market, and other participating outlets, they are provided matching dollars to purchase additional locally grown food. This allows for federally matched dollars to go directly to local farms that grow fruits and vegetables and helps provide new customers and larger clientele. Further, programs like this, go to support healthy diets and lifestyles by increasing access to fruits and vegetables.

Roughly one in ten U.S. adults meet the recommended fruit and vegetable intake recommendations according to CDC data. This number is further halved in instances of low-income families and low access areas for residents residing in food deserts or food swamps. This program provides support to vendors and markets to process SNAP, allowing for better accessibility for fruits and vegetables to all customers. Diets higher in fruits and vegetables helps prevent and alleviate symptoms associated with some of the most common dieses in America, heart dieses, stroke, and diabetes.

Nutrition incentive programs have such a profound impact on local communities. They provide supports for local farmers, they provide support for communities' farmers' markets and participating outlets, and for individuals to get better access to healthier choices throughout the entire state of Wisconsin. Thank you again for scheduling this hearing and taking up this amendment. Its truly a joy to be able to work on a similar program and see its profound impact, and all the more exciting to see all the great effort and work to ensure all Wisconsinites have access to locally produced fresh fruits and vegetables.

Thank you,

Andrew Hirst
Double Dollars Program Coordinator
CACSCW