

Date: August 17, 2015

Re: Assembly Bill 222, photo identification cards for FoodShare recipients.

To: Chairperson Born and Assembly Committee on Public Benefit Reform Members

From: Barbara Beckert, Director Milwaukee Office

Disability Rights Wisconsin is the federally mandated protection and advocacy agency for Wisconsinites with disabilities, including people with mental illness, designated by the Governor to protect the rights of people with disabilities. Part of our charge is to make sure that people with disabilities are able to live and work in the least restrictive, most integrated settings possible and be free from abuse and neglect. Access to Food Share benefits is an important issue for people with disabilities, both in terms of preventing neglect and promoting integrated, community living.

We ask for your consideration of some major concerns regarding Assembly Bill 222 that will negatively impact people with disabilities.

Adults with disabilities make up a disproportionate share of those living in poverty. In 2010, adults with disabilities made up 19 percent of those in poverty, while making up only 11.7 percent of the population as a whole. Women with disabilities represented 19.5 percent of women living in poverty, but only 12.2 percent of women as a whole. Given the high percentage of people with disabilities who are very poor, there is heavy reliance on the FoodShare program to help provide access to nutrition for people with disabilities. According to the Department of Health Services, 22% of FoodShare recipients are either elderly, blind, or have a disability; and 40% of households receiving FoodShare benefits contain at least one individual that is either elderly, blind, or has a disability.

The proposal to require photos of individual FoodShare recipients on their Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards, and for recipients to then present their cards to store clerks when purchasing food, will create significant barriers for people with disabilities. The most significant issue with this proposed legislation is that many people with disabilities rely on others to assist them with purchasing food.

One of the largest contributing factors to this practice is that many people with disabilities have limited access to reliable transportation. Many people do not drive because of their disability, poverty, or lack of accessible transportation services in their community. The 2013 Transportation Survey for People with Disabilities in Wisconsin found that 75% of respondents said that transportation services impact their ability to shop and support local businesses, and 26% of

MADISON

131 W. Wilson St.
Suite 700
Madison, WI 53703

608 267-0214
608 267-0368 FAX

MILWAUKEE

6737 West Washington St.
Suite 3230
Milwaukee, WI 53214

414 773-4646
414 773-4647 FAX

RICE LAKE

217 West Knapp St.
Rice Lake, WI 54868

715 736-1232
715 736-1252 FAX

disabilityrightswi.org

800 928-8778 consumers & family

respondents reported that there is no accessible transportation in their community. Others have very limited mobility and ability to leave their home, due to the nature of their disability.

As a result of these factors, many people with disabilities rely on family members, neighbors, paid caregivers, or others in their support network to purchase food for them. Federal rules require that a FoodShare household has the right to designate a family member or nonmember [7 CFR §273.2(kn)(3)] to use its ID card and benefits to purchase food or meals for the household. In addition, federal rules also state that a FoodShare household has the right to designate a trusted relative, friend or social agency to food shop for them [7 CFR §273.2(n)(1)]. The name of the authorized representative must be recorded in the household's case record and on the food stamp identification (ID) card. A photo ID on the EBT card of the head of household must not prohibit an authorized representative from using the Quest card.

The proposed legislation does not address these unique needs, and people with disabilities would be disproportionately harmed if they lose the ability to have a designated support person purchase food for them using an EBT card.

In addition, this initiative would require additional visits to the county income maintenance office to obtain the photo ID. This may be difficult for persons with disabilities, older adults, and others with limited access to transportation, and may cause some of the most needy to drop off the program entirely.

We also ask you to consider that implementing AB 222 will be very costly. The fiscal estimate for AB222, states the implementation would cost \$7.4M (\$3.7M GPR and \$3.7M FED) and ongoing costs are estimated at \$2M annually. This is a major cost, and it may be low as it is based on an estimate of for 368,100 of the 794,869 FoodShare recipients. There are currently 402,882 FoodShare Households in Wisconsin.

In summary, if enacted, AB 222 would make it more difficult for people with disabilities to access their FoodShare benefits because it will limit the ability to have family members, neighbors, paid caregivers, or other authorized representatives to purchase food for them using an EBT card. We believe that placing photos on EBT cards would be a hardship for many people with disabilities and is likely to increase hunger.

We ask that you oppose AB 222.