

# Hunger Task Force Position Paper

## Hunger Task Force Position

- [SB19](#) will have the greatest negative impact of the most vulnerable FoodShare recipients: kids.
- [SB19](#) is expensive and impractical for State of Wisconsin taxpayers to implement and maintain.
- [SB19](#) is limits food access without solving the problem of child support compliance
- [SB19](#) will increase hunger in Wisconsin.

## Hunger Task Force OPPOSES [SB19](#)

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### BACKGROUND

FoodShare is Wisconsin's name for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), traditionally called Food Stamps. SNAP is an entitlement program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, administered in Wisconsin by the Department of Health Services (DHS). Currently, FoodShare benefits may only be used to purchase food, not including hot or prepared items. [Forty-three-percent of FoodShare recipients are minors](#)<sup>1</sup>.

### ANALYSIS

SB 19 prohibits individuals who refuse to cooperate in determining the paternity of a child or with a child support order from being eligible for FoodShare benefits. SB 19 also prohibits parents who refuse to cooperate in providing or obtaining support for their child or who are delinquent in child support payments and do not satisfy an exception from being eligible for FoodShare benefits. This dramatic modification to the FoodShare program is offered without reference to practicality, effectiveness or implementation and continuity costs.

#### **[SB19](#) will have the greatest negative impact of the most vulnerable FoodShare recipients: kids.**

- 43% of FoodShare recipients are children. When a child is in a non-custodial parent's care, parents should be able to provide nutritious meals for their children. A late child support payment does not mean a non-custodial parent does not love or spend time with their child. The State of Wisconsin should not take away access to food aid from struggling non-custodial parents.
- SB19 burdens the main caregiver of a child, usually the mother. If she does not wish to establish paternity, she must provide a "good cause" to the State to maintain access to food aid. If the State of Wisconsin takes away FoodShare access from the mother, the child will also lose access to FoodShare.

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<sup>1</sup> [Department of Health Services, FoodShare at a Glance, December 2016.](#)

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**SB19 is expensive and impractical for State of Wisconsin taxpayers to implement and maintain.**

- SB19 will add complications and inefficiencies that will increase the cost of FoodShare administration. The Governor's Budget estimates \$943,600 in administration costs to implement this initiative.
- The Department of Children and Families estimates that a child support data system would be required to implement this bill with an estimate of 5000 IT hours and a cost of \$412,500.

**SB19 limits food access without solving the problem of child support compliance.**

- SB19 does nothing to truly lift people out of poverty. If the non-compliant parent loses their FoodShare due to not paying child support, they are not in any better position to pay the child support. This creates a program that does not empower either parent to become independent of the FoodShare program.
- SB19 does not solve child support compliance issues. The State of Wisconsin has numerous ways to punish people for non-compliance with child support, including jail. We should not add taking away food to this list.

Agencies may:

- Seize Bank Accounts
  - Seize titled personal property (cars)
  - Seize real estate (including land)
  - Withhold income
  - Deny, restrict, suspend, or not renew a license
  - Intercept tax refunds
  - Deny loans
  - Deny passport issuance
- SB 19 pits two vulnerable groups against each other: single parents versus parents who owe child support. If the purpose of this bill is to make parents take on more responsibility for their child, taking away one's FoodShare for not establishing paternity or paying child support may instead instill resentment between the parents or between the parent and their child.

**SB19 will increase hunger in Wisconsin.**

- Providing FoodShare to low-income non-custodial parents helps to meet a child's nutritional needs. FoodShare is not a cash benefit and reduces barriers for low-income families to achieve food security. Whether a non-custodial parent is or is not in compliance, SB19 would lead to a decreased food benefit for the family while opening the door to increased burden on the custodial parent.

Hunger Task Force works to feed hungry people with respect and dignity. Hunger does not respect age, sex, race or background. Many visitors to local pantries and soup kitchens never would have anticipated the unforeseen circumstances that put them in the position of asking for help. We do not believe that people struggling to feed themselves are second class citizens. One of the benefits of the FoodShare program is it gets people out of the food pantry system and into the grocery store. Food is not a punishment. As a society, we should not take away food as a modern day debt collection system. By making parents choose between feeding their children or paying child support, we are putting the most vulnerable populations in a no-win situation.

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## FOODSHARE FACTS:

- SNAP participation has been found to reduce food insecurity for households.<sup>1</sup>
- Food insecurity has been found to have many negative impacts on the health of individuals including higher rates of diabetes, heart disease, and depression.<sup>1</sup>
- About 718,212 people (one in eight) in Wisconsin currently use SNAP / FoodShare benefits.<sup>2</sup> In 2015, more than 1.035 million people (18%) in Wisconsin received SNAP / FoodShare.<sup>3</sup>
- In 2016, about 67% of FoodShare recipients are either minors (43%) or elderly, blind or disabled (24%).<sup>4</sup>
- In 2016, about 33.6% of FoodShare households have at least one person working. 41% of adult recipients are employed.<sup>4</sup>
- About 35% of FoodShare recipients are female adults and about 22% are male adults.<sup>5</sup>
- Between 2009 and 2012, SNAP kept 125,000 people out of poverty in Wisconsin, including 54,000 children.<sup>6</sup>
- The average allotment per SNAP/FoodShare individual in Wisconsin is about \$105.90 per month.<sup>7</sup>
- 100% of FoodShare benefits are paid by the federal government. Program administration is shared equally between the state and federal governments.<sup>8</sup>
- \$1.00 of FoodShare generates \$1.70 in local economic activity.<sup>9</sup>
  - Wisconsinites received more than \$9.1 million in FoodShare benefits in 2016,<sup>3</sup> which generated more than \$1.55 billion dollars in economic activity.

<sup>1</sup> *Does SNAP decrease food insecurity?*; USDA Economic Research Service Report Number 85, October 2009

<sup>2</sup> Olson, C.M. (1999). *Nutritional and Health Outcomes Associated with Food Insecurity and Hunger*. The Journal of Nutrition, 129: 521524.

<sup>3</sup> *Wisconsin Department of Health Services* (December, 2016)

<sup>4</sup> *Wisconsin Department of Health Services* (December, 2015)

<sup>5</sup> *FoodShare Wisconsin Program at a Glance, January 2016-December 2016*. Wisconsin Department of Health Services.

<sup>6</sup> SNAP Factsheets. [http://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/snap\\_factsheet\\_wisconsin.pdf](http://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/snap_factsheet_wisconsin.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Wisconsin Department of Health Services (December, 2016)

<sup>8</sup> *Wisconsin Legislative Fiscal Bureau "Food Share Wisconsin"*. January 2011, pg. 5

<sup>9</sup> *Policy Basics: Introduction to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)*. (2016). CBPP.

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