

2017-19 Wisconsin Budget: Impact on Hunger

The Governor's budget dramatically changes the FoodShare (formerly known as food stamp) program, gutting protections for families that truly need help. FoodShare benefits are 100% federal money. FoodShare can only be used for groceries and helps the most vulnerable people in our state. Nearly half of FoodShare recipients are children and over 80% live in a working household.

The best way to end hunger is with family-sustaining jobs. ***Taking away access to food does not increase independence, it only increases hunger.***

5 things to know about the Governor's proposed budget:

1. The budget will increase hunger in Wisconsin.

The proposed changes to FoodShare eligibility will impact over 100,000 people in Wisconsin, kicking tens of thousands off of food aid.

2. The budget spends \$150 Million to expand a broken system.

The current FoodShare Employment & Training Program is broken. It needs to be fixed, not expanded to impact 100,000 parents.

The last budget spent nearly \$55 Million and kicked 64,000 people off of FoodShare - this proposal will hurt more people. The Governor's benchmarks will have taxpayers paying out-of-state job training companies \$8,694 for every job in 2017-18 and nearly \$16,000 in 2018-19.

3. "Dead broke" vs. "deadbeats." There is a difference.

This budget eliminates FoodShare eligibility for parents not in compliance with child support. Parents are often "dead broke" not "dead beats". Taking away food doesn't help parents pay child support or feed their children. A late child support payment does not mean a parent does not love to want to care for their child.

4. Piles of paperwork = Piles of problems.

FoodShare benefits will be denied for anyone not elderly, blind, or disabled whose household has over \$25,000 in liquid assets. The paperwork required to prove eligibility is daunting. Pennsylvania stopped their asset test after 111,000 households were denied benefits because they had trouble producing all of the required documentation.

5. Childhood hunger will increase.

While the changes to FoodShare are intended for adults, kids will be the ones left with an empty plate. When parents lose access to food aid, their children go hungry.

FoodShare Employment & Training: Fixing a Broken System

The best way to end hunger is with family-sustaining jobs. FoodShare Employment & Training provides an opportunity to help low-income Wisconsinites gain independence. Investing \$150 million in quality job-training is a great idea and a big step toward ending hunger.

Our current FoodShare Employment & Training system is broken. We should fix FSET before we expand it. We should not mandate participation. We should waive FoodShare time limits in areas of high unemployment.

5 Ways to improve the FoodShare Employment & Training program:

1. FSET contractors should have meaningful benchmarks that incentivize moving people toward careers, not temporary jobs.
2. FSET should remove real barriers to employment by providing FoodShare recipients with access to free civil legal aid to help them restore driver's licenses, obtain reasonable child support orders, and address consumer and criminal records issues.
3. FSET should individualize employment plans based on skill set, location and need instead of handing out generic print-outs of temporary job openings.
4. FSET participation should not be a mandate. Wisconsin should eliminate time-limited FoodShare benefits. 10 counties and 3 cities in Wisconsin are designated as "labor surplus areas" where there are significantly more people looking for work than jobs available. Mandating work does not create jobs.
5. FSET funding should be directed toward the Wisconsin technical colleges. Wisconsin technical colleges and the Wisconsin Transitional Jobs Program have proven track-records of creating real paths toward sustainable employment.

Every Wisconsin resident deserves to have the opportunity for a great education and a family-supporting job. The budget should create long-term solutions, not quick-fixes to barriers to employment. FSET funding should be transparent and contractors should be accountable for how taxpayer money is spent. We have an opportunity to make a smart investment and urge our elected officials to make the right choice.