

Hunger Task Force Position Paper

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- [AB263](#) will have the greatest negative impact on vulnerable FoodShare recipients: the elderly, the blind, and disabled; victims of domestic violence and the homeless.
- [AB263](#) is expensive and impractical for State of Wisconsin taxpayers to implement and maintain.
- [AB263](#) will increase hunger in Wisconsin.

Hunger Task Force OPPOSES [AB263](#)

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. FoodShare benefits are currently expunged after 365 days in accordance with [federal regulations](#). [Twenty-five-percent of FoodShare recipients are either elderly, blind, or disabled.](#)

ANALYSIS

[AB263](#) will create incentive programs for counties and tribes to receive reward payments for identifying fraudulent activity; the removal and offline storage of benefits from certain FoodShare accounts; and expunge FoodShare benefits that have been unused for over one year. AB263 will also limit the number of replacement electronic benefit cards a FoodShare recipient may receive during the year. This dramatic modification to the FoodShare program is offered without reference to practicality, effectiveness, or implementation and continuity costs.

[AB263](#) will have the greatest negative impact on vulnerable FoodShare recipients: the elderly, the blind, and disabled (EBD); victims of crime; and the homeless.

- [25%](#) of FoodShare recipients are either elderly, blind, or disabled. 46% of FoodShare households have an elderly, blind, or disabled member.
 - In 2015 DHS conducted a study regarding carryover FoodShare, 11,548 recipients had inactive accounts for 6 months or more -- about 1.45% of total recipients during this time.
 - 62.5% of cases inactive for 6 months were individuals that received less than \$20 per month.
 - In the same study done by the Department of Health Services in 2015, 32.1% of cases inactive for 6 months had at least one EBD individual
- Only [40% of seniors](#) who are eligible utilize the FoodShare program. There are many barriers that contribute to this low participation rate including: mobility; technology; program stigma; and widespread myths about how the program works and who qualifies.

- AB263 requires individuals to either contact the state agency to gain access to their benefits or re-apply for food aid taken offline, which if approved will take up to 48 hours to appear in their account. Adding administrative hurdles will cause more seniors to drop out of the program. There is also not a guarantee of access to all of their benefits that were taken offline, that is up to the discretion of the state agency. This lack of clarity will cause confusion and put individuals who are already in dire situations in a worse position.
- [30% of EBD](#) caseload is receiving an allotment of \$20 or less. Often, these households save up their benefits from month-to-month for a variety of factors: to stretch their food aid by purchasing in bulk, transportation and mobility issues. AB263 will harm our most vulnerable citizens.
- [AB263](#) fails to articulate how an EBT card is counted and how the bill will protect the most vulnerable citizens.
 - By not detailing how state agencies count replacement cards, individuals who need a replacement EBT card will not know how the cards are being tracked in the system. Are temporary cards counted? What if a card never gets to the intended recipient due to clerical error or theft? What if a victim of domestic violence flees a violent home and needs an additional FoodShare card to feed his/her family?
- Federal regulations [require](#) that while regulating replacement cards, a State agency shall act to protect household containing homeless persons, elderly or disabled members, victims of crimes and other vulnerable persons who may lose EBT cards but are not committing fraud. AB263 fails to follow this federal rule.

[AB263](#) is expensive and impractical for State of Wisconsin taxpayers to implement and maintain.

- Nationally, nearly [80% of SNAP/FoodShare](#) benefits are used within the first half of the month.
- Wisconsin already expunges unused FoodShare benefits after 365 days.
- Moving unused benefits offline after 6 months will likely have a chilling effect on seniors who are already reluctant to use the FoodShare program.
- Limiting the number of replacement cards that an individual can receive in a year will harm vulnerable persons seeking help with obtaining food to feed themselves and their family.

[AB263](#) will increase hunger in Wisconsin.

- [AB263](#) will increase the stigma associated with the program and provide another hurdle for the already under-enrolled senior demographic.
- Limiting the number of EBT cards will cause confusion and the most vulnerable FoodShare recipients will lose access to food aid.

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. Limiting benefits by either expunging unused benefits or limiting replacement EBT cards will only add more stigma and confusion to the nation's leading anti-hunger initiative.

FOODSHARE FACTS:

- SNAP participation has been found to reduce food insecurity for households.¹
- Food insecurity has been found to have many negative impacts on the health of individuals including higher rates of diabetes, heart disease, and depression.¹
- About 696,930 people (roughly one in eight) in Wisconsin currently use SNAP / FoodShare benefits.² In 2016, 967,356 people (17%) in Wisconsin received SNAP / FoodShare.³
- In 2016, about 67% of FoodShare recipients were either minors (43%) or elderly, blind or disabled (24%).⁴
- In 2016, about 33.6% of FoodShare households had at least one person working. 41% of adult recipients are employed.⁴
- About 35% of FoodShare recipients are female adults and about 22% are male adults.⁵
- Between 2009 and 2012, SNAP kept 125,000 people out of poverty in Wisconsin, including 54,000 children.⁶
- In 2016, the average allotment per SNAP/FoodShare individual in Wisconsin is about \$105.90 per month.⁷
- 100% of FoodShare benefits are paid by the federal government. Program administration is shared equally between the state and federal governments.⁸
- \$1.00 of FoodShare generates \$1.70 in local economic activity.⁹
 - Wisconsinites received more than \$9.1 million in FoodShare benefits in 2016,³ which generated more than \$1.55 billion dollars in economic activity.

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

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

³ *Wisconsin Department of Health Services* (April 2017)

⁴ *Wisconsin Department of Health Services* (2016)

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

⁶ SNAP Factsheets. http://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/snap_factsheet_wisconsin.pdf

⁷ Wisconsin Department of Health Services (December, 2016)

⁸ *Wisconsin Legislative Fiscal Bureau "Food Share Wisconsin"*. January 2011, pg. 5

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