



## **Principles to Ensure a Strong, Effective, and Efficient Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) for Wisconsin Taxpayers**

Our vision for a thriving Wisconsin is one where everybody has the food and nutrition they need to work, learn and live healthy lives.

For those who can work, a good paying job is the best tool we have in our hunger-fighting toolbox. The second best hunger-fighting tool is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, or FoodShare in Wisconsin).

SNAP is the nation's and Wisconsin's largest hunger fighting program. It serves over 700,000 of our friends and neighbors by providing them an average monthly food buying benefit of \$108 per person. This average monthly benefit ranks 51<sup>st</sup> out of the 53 United States and territories where the program operates. The average participant is only in the program for just under a year. Its payment accuracy rate (96%) is at an all-time high and its fraud rate (1.6%) is very low.

Food banks and locally administered federal nutrition programs like SNAP work in concert with each other to ensure that our friends and neighbors have the care, support, and nutrition they need to work, learn, and live healthy lives. In order for the emergency food system to do its job effectively, nutrition programs must also keep its promise to provide assistance to the people who are eligible and qualify.

Feeding Wisconsin urges legislators to adopt these principles to ensure that the program maintains its effectiveness and continues to have the flexibility to support families with the food they need to turn their lives around.

### **Prioritize policies for natural contraction versus artificial contraction**

There are two ways to reduce program cost. The first is through natural reduction, where people earn enough money through work to become no longer eligible.

The second is artificial reduction, which occurs after a policy or structural change is enacted that cuts people off the program, leaving them with little or no income and no assistance.

Program savings must not be achieved through artificial program contraction but rather through program participants earning enough money to no longer qualify.

### **Ensure High Quality, Cost Effective, Efficient and Data-Driven Administration**

The SNAP program must continue to prioritize program quality, efficiency, cost effectiveness and accessibility to all people in need of food assistance.

Policies should be pursued that coordinate eligibility and streamline program participation between SNAP and other means tested programs to reduce cost, increase efficiencies and maximize the impact of nutrition programs.

Any changes to nutrition assistance programs, including those intended to eliminate duplication or increase flexibility, must be data-driven and undertaken only after careful study and analysis of the potential impact on benefit levels, eligibility, and participation.

### **Work Training Must Work**

In Wisconsin, only about 13% of single adults without children referred to employment and training programs were connected to jobs. This program needs to be improved. At the same time, it is important to remember that SNAP is a nutrition program, not a jobs program.

Rather than mandating broad requirements that SNAP participants be engaged in work activities, employment and training investments should provide both meaningful training opportunities and seek to better understand and address the barriers that unemployed and underemployed people experience when attempting to engage with the labor market, such as lack of access to quality childcare or dependable transportation.

Fine-tuning work training programs should be developed in collaboration with stakeholder input from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors, including the clients who utilize these programs.

### **Focus on Nutrition through Benefit Adequacy**

SNAP must provide resources sufficient to meet the nutritional needs of participants and any savings from greater efficiencies should be reinvested in improving benefit adequacy.

Healthful foods like fruit, vegetables, meat and dairy are more expensive per calorie and can be more time intensive to prepare than less healthful, processed foods. While all families balance these choices, families with low-incomes have less flexibility in their grocery bill.

Highly targeted, tested healthy eating incentives like the Double Up Bucks program that increases the SNAP benefit through the purchase of healthful food is a promising model to increase benefit adequacy while focusing on nutrition.

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