



January 11, 2018

TO: The Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Public Benefits, Licensing & State-Federal Relations

FROM: Brad Paul,
Executive Director

Jonathan Bader
Programs & Policy Director

RE: SB 624 to Require Photo IDs for Wisconsin FoodShare Recipients

We want to thank the Committee Chair & Members for accepting our testimony on SB 624.

WISCAP is the statewide Association of Wisconsin's 16 anti-poverty Community Action Agencies and 2 special purpose agencies. Thirteen (13) of our members and 3 other partners coordinate the statewide distribution of federal TEFAP commodities to 334 food pantries, meal sites and shelters in every county. Food pantries in our network serve 200,000 people each month, while meal sites & shelters provide 45,000 meals each month. Community Action Agencies have been involved in addressing food security in Wisconsin for many decades. In November WISCAP passed a significant milestone - the distribution of 200 million pounds of commodities to local communities over the past 20 years.

WISCAP is opposed to SB 624 for a number of reasons:

- Foremost is the hardship this would impose on elderly, blind & disabled people and rural residents.
- The provision would increase hunger in Wisconsin.
- The requirement would increase bureaucracy & program cost with no benefit to recipients.

Foremost is the hardship this would impose on elderly, blind & disabled people and rural residents. In order to comply with a photo ID requirement adult recipients would have to travel to the Human Services agency in their county to get their photo taken. This would be a considerable hardship for the 25% of SNAP recipients who are elderly, blind or disabled – many of whom either do not drive, lack a reliable vehicle or lack access to transportation. The 31% of FoodShare recipients in 47 rural counties often live a considerable distance from the county human services office and many lack reliable transportation and with no access to mass transit. During winter months they must contend with adverse weather. Requiring so many vulnerable citizens with small incomes who play by the rules to now obtain a photo ID to access basic nutrition seems a callous disregard for their already difficult circumstances.

The provision would increase hunger in Wisconsin. There is little doubt that thousands of honest, food insecure Wisconsinites – who are eligible for nutrition assistance – would feel so discouraged, challenged or frustrated by the ID requirement that they would either not apply or would see their existing benefits lapse or be disrupted. This, in turn, would impact countless children living in the affected households. The committee members and the legislature should be profoundly skeptical of any proposal that would create such adverse outcomes.

The requirement would increase bureaucracy & program cost with no benefit to recipients. Wisconsin has taken many steps over many administrations to improve the efficiency of FoodShare in Wisconsin to save taxpayer dollars. Central to this effort have been internet-based improvements like the ACCESS website so eligible citizens can apply for and manage their nutrition benefits from their homes & communities and use of the current EBT card to distribute benefits electronically. These improvements have limited costly and time-consuming face-to-face meetings with case workers. Implementing an unnecessary ID requirement goes counter to these cost-saving strategies. It would require substantial taxpayer dollars to pay for staffing, photographic equipment, software, machines to produce EBT Photo ID cards, as well as tens of thousands of hours in participant travel and associated costs. Fiscal estimates alone place implementation costs at \$7.6 million with ongoing annual costs of \$1.6 million. This is an enormous waste of taxpayer resources to address imagined fraud in a program with an established 97.5% payment accuracy rate.

For these reasons WISCAP strongly urges committee members to vote against SB 624.

For more information on WISCAP and Community Action's work on food security and anti-poverty initiatives please contact Brad Paul (608-244-4422) or Jonathan Bader (608-244-0745).

About WISCAP: *WISCAP is the statewide association of Wisconsin's 16 anti-poverty Community Action Agencies and 2 statewide special purpose agencies. Our network addresses the problems of poverty across multiple sectors by helping low-income people attain greater economic self-sufficiency and by relieving situations of distress. Community Action Agencies strengthen families and communities by providing programs and services, including housing, energy, transportation, education, health, business development, family support, and food security.*