



JERRY PETROWSKI

WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR

Senate Bill 474: Harvest for Hope Matching Grant
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Small Business and Tourism
January 06, 2015

Good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to speak today on Senate Bill 474.

Each year in Wisconsin, millions of pounds of edible and nutritious produce remain unharvested in farm fields due to fluctuating market forces and unpredictable surpluses. This produce goes unused even though 13% of Wisconsin residents – nearly 720,000 individuals – are at risk of hunger each day. To help combat this serious hunger issue, many Wisconsin farmers donate surplus produce to local food programs. However, these farmers incur a loss during the harvesting process.

Senate Bill 474, the “Harvest for Hope” grant proposal, would create a four year public-private partnership between the state, Wisconsin food banks, and Wisconsin’s agricultural and food industry. This partnership will significantly increase the amount of healthy and nutritious vegetables available at Wisconsin food banks for state residents at risk of hunger while also benefitting Wisconsin farmers and food processors. A true win-win.

The Harvest for Hope public-private partnership will help expand and advance farmers’ charitable efforts by covering harvest costs for farmers to provide surplus produce to Wisconsin food banks. Additionally, it will leverage efficiencies of scale in harvesting and processing of food to unlock vast amounts of fresh, nutritious canned Wisconsin-grown commodities for Wisconsin food banks.

Specifically, Harvest for Hope requires the Department of Agriculture Trade & Consumer Protection (DATCP) to award \$1 to a statewide association of food banks for every \$1 of private funds that the association raises for the donation and processing of Wisconsin-grown agricultural products. DATCP may award a total of \$250,000 in each fiscal year for four years. The funds will be used to assist with harvest costs incurred by farmers who donate Wisconsin-grown produce and for the preservation, transportation, and distribution to local food banks and food pantries.

Overall, Harvest for Hope will significantly increase the amount of healthy, locally-grown produce available for Wisconsin residents at risk of hunger.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak on this bill. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

29TH SENATE DISTRICT

David Lee
Executive Director, Feeding Wisconsin
2850 Dairy Drive
Madison, WI 53718

Testimony of David Lee
IN SUPPORT OF SB 474 HARVEST FOR HOPE
Before the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Small Business and Tourism
January 6, 2016

Dear Chairman Moulton and Agriculture committee members:

My name is David Lee and I serve as the Executive Director of Feeding Wisconsin, the statewide association of the Feeding America food banks.

I have been fighting hunger at the local, state and national levels for the last 7 years and I as the proud son in law of hard working Wisconsin farmers in Marathon County, it is quite an honor to be here to testify about how Harvest for Hope is a common sense public policy response to the problem of surplus agriculture and hunger in our state.

First, a little bit about our organization. We are a member-organized and supported association representing six regional member food banks in the state of Wisconsin. Together, through the food banks network local partners in serve every single county in the state, we provided 45 million meals to our friends and neighbors in 2014.

Our mission is to coordinate and enhance the work of our member food banks so that together we can strive forward toward a Hunger-Free Wisconsin.

While the current system of large scale agricultural donation works, there are still vast amounts of surplus, fresh Wisconsin grown food products that are left in the field that simply costs our agricultural donors too much to harvest for donation.

With a little bit of funding to cover the marginal costs of harvest, food banks can serve as small a safety net for Wisconsin farmers for the products that are grown for consumption.

This is not a new idea. Our peer states like Minnesota, Iowa and Michigan have each enacted similar policies where the state invests in their food banks to rescue fresh, surplus agriculture for distribution to food pantries.

Just earlier this week, Ohio announced that they would be increasing their state's investment in food banks by an additional \$500,000.

States have made it a priority to invest in their food banks these investments allow both the state and food banks to leverage their respective scale for impact. In FY14, twenty-six states across the country invested about \$93 million in their food banks. These dollars helped to fill in the large gap between private donations and federal funding.

So while the idea of a surplus agricultural program is not new, what is for Harvest for Hope, is the fresh-for-processing component.

Everybody knows that when the harvest comes, you have a lot of a few products. And sometimes, even food banks may not be able to distribute the surplus as the demand for a certain product may simply be saturated. So, what to do with these products?

Through the Field to Food Bank program, on which Harvest for Hope is modeled, we have established partnerships in place where we can incrementally process at scale amazing, first run Wisconsin grown products. This extremely exciting and at scale can provide a bounty of fresh, nutritious off-season, Wisconsin grown products. However, since we would be piggybacking on industrial processes, there is no flexibility in this system.

To solve for that, we have a pilot partnership right now with production kitchens in the state to better understand the challenges and opportunities in the smaller processing market, which would have the flexibility take in a couple of thousand pounds of potatoes and cabbage to make a frozen soup. While this partnership is only in the pilot, exploratory stage, if proved effective, it would be transformative for our farmers, food pantries and most importantly, the people who we serve.

Thank you for the time today. I hope the committee can join me, the many others here, and people around the state that support SB 474. Harvest for Hope is a win-win for our state's agricultural community and also for the Wisconsin families utilizing the emergency food system as a support to get through their tough time. Providing healthy food for today and hope for a better tomorrow is a goal that everybody should be able to support.

Charles McLimans
Feeding America Eastern Wisconsin
1700 Fond du Lac Ave
Milwaukee, WI 53205

Testimony of Charles McLimans
President/CEO, Feeding America Eastern Wisconsin
IN SUPPORT OF SB 474 HARVEST FOR HOPE
Before the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Small Business and Tourism
January 6, 2016

Dear Chairman Moulton and Committee Members:

My name is Charles McLimans and I am entering my second year as the leader of Feeding America Eastern Wisconsin, the largest hunger-relief organization in Wisconsin operating food banks in Milwaukee and the Fox Valley. I have been a leader in the fight against hunger for the past 10 years, and have been a nonprofit CEO for over 20 years. I am a native of the Badger State and the son of Wisconsin dairy farmers. Together with a network of more than 550 local partners, Feeding America Eastern Wisconsin provides more than 20 million meals a year to 377,000 people – including 124,000 children and 41,000 seniors.

Our mission, very simply, is to solve hunger. We are working to provide food to families facing hunger. But we are also going beyond that. We are working with partners throughout eastern Wisconsin to address the root causes of hunger – focusing specifically on the areas of food, health, housing and employment.

We are proud to support SB 474. This important legislation will provide the resources necessary for us to increase the supply of free and locally grown food to our partner food pantries and emergency meal programs throughout our 36-county service area, which extends along the eastern half of the state.

Feeding America Eastern Wisconsin is the largest, private, nonprofit hunger relief organization in the state with locations in Milwaukee and the Fox Valley. Founded in 1982 by the Rotary Club of Milwaukee as Second Harvest of Wisconsin, we are a local and independent member of the Feeding America network. Our affiliation with a national network allows us to leverage resources efficiently to benefit nearly 600 hunger relief organizations right here in Wisconsin, including food pantries, meal programs, shelters and community-based mobile pantries. Together, we provide 20 million meals annually to 377,000 people living in communities from Kenosha to Eagle River. Of those, 33% are children and 11% are seniors. In FY2015, we distributed 16,000, 000 pounds of free food.

Hunger and long-term food insecurity are public health issues. The local food pantries and meal programs we partner with are on the front lines of combatting this issue. Increasing the amount of healthy and nutritious food we are able to

provide to them for the people they serve is critical to improving the health of our most vulnerable populations, especially children, seniors and those living with chronic disease.

It's no secret that food insecurity and chronic health issues are closely linked. According to our Hunger Study conducted in 2014:

- 31 percent of client households have a member with diabetes.
- 55 percent of client households have a member with high blood pressure.
- 60 percent of client households have medical bills to pay.
- 67% of households choose between paying for food and paying for medicine/medical care
- 26 percent of client households lack health insurance of any kind (including Medicaid).
- 82% purchased inexpensive, unhealthy food as a coping strategy, which exacerbates many chronic health conditions.

We have begun to expand our ability to source and distribute more fresh food to our partner food pantries and meal programs. In FY 2015 we distributed 12,526,773 meals through our Fresh Rescue program, an increase of 19% over FY2014.

Harvest for Hope will enable us to source even more healthy and nutritious foods from local farmers. In fact, because the program will match every dollar Wisconsin food banks raise and invest in fresh produce, Harvest for Hope will double our ability to distribute high-quality fresh produce free to our network of pantries in the state so that it gets into the homes of families that need it the most.

Finally, the Harvest for Hope partnership would serve as a good pilot for state investment in emergency food programming, which currently does not exist.

We are proud to support SB 474. The goal of the program, which is to help hard working farmers increase the amount of free, fresh and healthy food available to food pantries is a goal that every organization and all individuals dedicated to fighting hunger should support.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Agriculture committee members, for your time today and for your support of this very important legislation.

Danielle Lawson
Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin
2802 Dairy Drive
Madison, WI 53718

Testimony of Danielle Lawson
Food Resource Manager, Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin
IN SUPPORT OF SB 474 HARVEST FOR HOPE
Before the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Small Business and Tourism
January 6, 2016

Dear Chairman Moulton and Committee Members:

My name is Danielle Lawson and I am the Food Resource Manager at Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin. Second Harvest is a nonprofit organization and our mission is to end hunger through community partnerships. Since 1986, we have provided food resources, capacity building and technical assistance to over hundreds of local food pantries, meal programs, and other agencies in our 16 county service area in Southern Wisconsin and will continue to do so until we have achieved our collective goal of ending hunger.

We support SB 474 because it will help us be able to provide more free, healthy and nutritious, Wisconsin grown food for food pantries and emergency meal programs.

My job at the food bank is to ensure that through donations from local grocers, food manufacturers, food processors and farmers, we have enough food resources so that our affiliated pantries have the variety of products they need to provide clients with a healthy, balanced emergency food box.

To address this, Second Harvest in partnership with the Wisconsin Institute for Sustainable Agriculture, growers, processors, packing sheds, and trucking companies, created the Field to Foodbank program, which makes sure the extra crops are put to good use.

In the four years of the program, more than 2 million pounds of nutrient-rich fresh and fresh-processed locally grown produce has made it to the tables of people facing hunger in southwestern Wisconsin.

Harvest for Hope is modeled on the successful Field to Foodbank Program and basically takes the program to scale statewide. According to our projections, we believe that if food banks can raise private dollar match and access the full \$250,000 state grant, Harvest of Hope would provide 2 million new pounds of nutritious fresh and fresh-processed Wisconsin grown food in one year for free to food pantries throughout the state.

The funds made available through this program will be extremely important in encouraging farmers to donate more and each public dollar will have great impact. Last March, during a visit to one of the many Farm to Foodbank donors, a farmer asked about the efforts to offset losses he incurs when donating. While he is committed to our mission, he can only donate so much before it costs him too much. He suggested that if simply donated money, he could at least claim it on his taxes.

I explained how grateful we are for his donation of produce, time, and materials to the program because it translated into a much larger impact. Due to economies of scale, we can make a single dollar stretch extremely far. As an example, every dollar donated to the food bank helps us generate enough food for three meals.

However, the contributions to Field to Foodbank can go even further. So far in this fiscal year through Field to Foodbank, with farmers providing fresh produce as well as the processed vegetables we get in partnership with state food processors, we are averaging near 10 meals for every dollar invested in the program.

Harvest for Hope will replicate and scale many of the successful practices already in place with Field to Foodbank, making it an ideal pilot for a state-supported public-private partnership.

We are excited to see our innovative program receive statewide interest and support. We hope that the committee and full Senate can join with us in supporting this important initiative.

Thank you Chairman and Agriculture committee members for your time and attention to this matter.

Marcia Kasieta
Badger Prairie Needs Network
1200 E. Verona Avenue
Verona, WI 53593

Testimony of Marcia Kasieta
IN SUPPORT OF SB 474 HARVEST FOR HOPE
Before the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Small Business and Tourism
January 6, 2016

Dear Chairman Moulton and Committee Members:

My name is Marcia Kasieta and I am a volunteer coordinator and board member at the Badger Prairie Needs Network in Verona. For more than 29 years, BPNN has provided food assistance to low and very low-income households in the Verona Area School District, including Verona and parts of Fitchburg and Madison.

We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to ending hunger and addressing the root causes of generational poverty in the communities we serve. In addition to a food pantry, we offer nutrition education, an on-site Joining Forces for Families Social Worker and space for the 18-21 year old transition program from the local high school. Because we are a 100% volunteer organization and every dollar we raise goes back into our programming to fight hunger and poverty.

In 2014, we served an average of 680 individuals each month – translating to over 122,200 meals and almost 8,000 total people served. Most of the households we helped had someone working for wage (65%) but they simply didn't earn enough to make ends meet.

The rest were people with disabilities, senior citizens on fixed incomes, and folks who had fallen on tough times or were temporarily unemployed. Almost half (47%) of those BPNN helped feed in 2014 were children.

Since moving into a larger, more accessible facility in August, these numbers have skyrocketed. In October of this year, we served over 1100 individuals – a 66% increase over the average number served just 1 year ago. Based on the number and size of new families registering for assistance, we forecast a "new normal" for our organization. With this increased demand for food assistance we are also seeing our costs increase.

We support SB 474 as it would provide more free, high quality, fresh, Wisconsin grown food for pantries like ours to distribute.

As we know, fresh fruits and vegetables are the foundations for a healthy diet. Unfortunately, on a per calorie basis, they are also more expensive to procure than the more calorically dense, but less healthful food options.

Last spring we worked with local farmers and community gardens to increase the flow of produce to our pantry. The amount and variety of food provided through these sources was immense – and we could have distributed much more had it been available. We circulated recipes along with the produce and made any excess available for pick-up throughout the month between pantry visits. Feedback was very positive – especially from older patrons and those with compromised health who cannot eat canned foods with high amounts of sugar and sodium. Young families processed the produce to make baby food and many of our clients learned to can and preserve the food in our commercial kitchen. These donations fell off in September and since then we have relied on Second Harvest and local grocers who often sell to us at a reduced cost.

We have found our partnership with Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin to be especially beneficial. Like many pantries throughout the state, we work on a shoestring budget to provide our patrons with a caring, dignified, respectful place to receive help and to get the food they need to nourish their families. Increased amounts of off-season produce from Second Harvest at no cost would really help our bottom line and relieve some of the budgetary pressure we feel during the non-growing season.

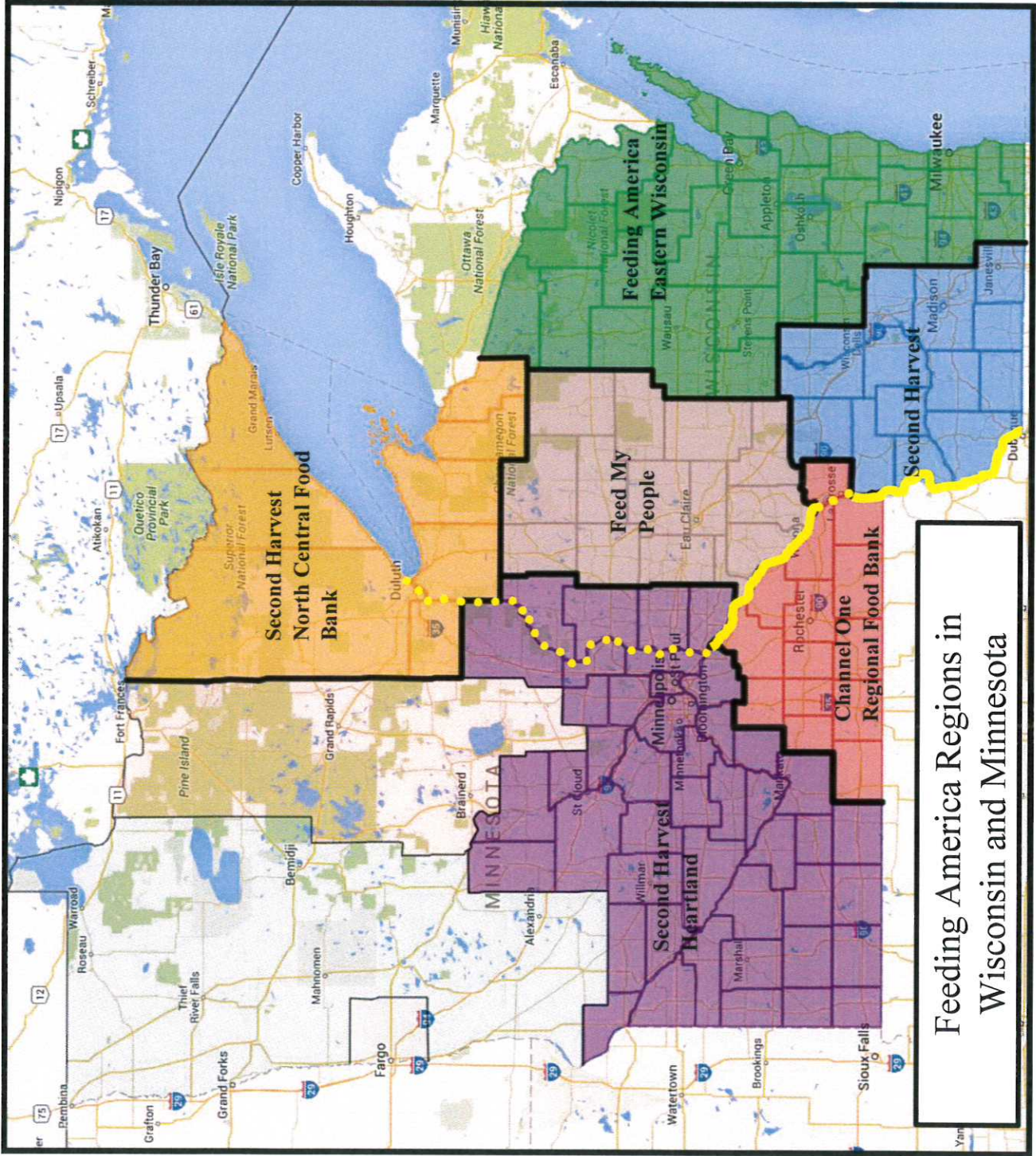
Increased fresh produce at no extra cost would also allow us to respond to the growing number of requests for assistance without reducing the amount of food we currently distribute to each household.

What's best about SB 474 is that it does not complicate the system for us. Today, we order much of the food we distribute from Second Harvest and they make weekly deliveries to our location in Verona.

The addition of the produce made possible through SB 474 would seamlessly flow through this process – allowing us to focus on the work that we do. It also won't get in the way of local farmers or other community organizations that wish to donate directly to us through small food drives and individual donations.

We urge the committee to join us in support of this important initiative.

Thank you Chairman and Agriculture committee members for your time and attention to this matter.



Feeding America Regions in Wisconsin and Minnesota

Roderick Gumz
Gumz Farms
N570 6th Court
Endeavor, WI 53930

Testimony of Roderick Gumz
IN SUPPORT OF SB 474 HARVEST FOR HOPE
Before the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Small Business and Tourism
January 6, 2016

Dear Chairman Moulton and Committee Members:

My name is Roderick Gumz and I am a fourth generation family farmer at Gumz Farms in Endeavor, Wisconsin. We are lucky to farm 6,000 rich acres in Marquette, Columbia, Adams and Sauk counties where we are proud to grow specialty crops like carrots, potatoes, onions, mint and other agricultural commodities. Over the course of the two few years, we have donated 1.75 million pounds – or 42 truckloads – to food banks in Wisconsin.

We support SB 474, a proposal that will help farmers feed more of our friends and neighbors in need and also help us reduce the amount of edible and nutritious food that is left in the fields.

Due to the many variables in the farming business, most farmers end up with edible and nutritious surplus. These excess crops can come from unpredictable weather patterns, market saturation or product culls and market seconds.

The right thing to do with surplus crops is to donate them to food banks and food pantries where they will ensure that Wisconsin families in tough times can get the nutritious food they need to make it through.

However, the donation process can often lead to a financial loss through the cost of packaging, labor, storage and transportation. For many farmers – where our margins are thin and subject to the whims of weather – this makes it economically sensible to simply leave the surplus in the fields.

This is why our state's food banks have created an innovative system to offset the marginal costs of donation to incentivize farmers to donate their surplus rather than plow them under. It doesn't cover the entire cost of donation but it certainly makes donating more financially feasible.

This is where SB 474 would be extremely helpful. By creating a public-private partnership with regional food banks in the state, SB 474 would help to generate more funds available to offset the costs of making donations of this fresh, healthy and nutritious source of food.

An appealing aspect of SB 474 is that there is one coordinating association to coordinate large donations. We are farmers. We like things simple. It would be a real difficulty for us to sort and make many small donations to thousands of different groups in the state and then wait for them to come to our facility to pick them up.

It would also be impossible for us to truck our donations to thousands of agencies throughout the state. We want our food to reach as many people as possible and the food banks help us do that.

In closing, we have found our partnership with the regional food banks to be transformative for us as a business and as people. As a farming business, we are stewards of the land and so we value sustainability. At the same time, we want our food, which we work hard at growing, to nourish families. But unfortunately, as we have learned since partnering with our state's food banks, far too many Wisconsin residents are not able to get enough nutritious food for themselves and their families.

SB 474 would help farmers like me and food pantries throughout the state better achieve both goals. It deserves the Agriculture committee's support and the support of the full state legislature.

Thank you Chairman and committee members for your time and attention to this matter.



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Life is an ECHO—What you send out, you get back!

Memo To: *WI Committee on Agriculture, Small Business, and Tourism*
From: Karen Lisser, ECHO Executive Director
Date: Wednesday, January 5, 2016
Subject: Senate Bill 474 – Public Hearing Comments, January 6, 2016

Introduction. My name is Karen Lisser, the third Executive Director of *Everyone Cooperating to Help Others, Inc. (ECHO)*, since January 1, 1995. Accompanying me today is Marge Sell, who has been ECHO's Food Resources Coordinator since October 1996. She also was an ECHO volunteer for 20 years before that.

ECHO Background. ECHO is a non-profit charity directly serving primarily low-income people in our area, but also helping other pantries in smaller surrounding communities to serve their residents. In late 1969, St. Mary's Catholic Church created what became the ECHO food pantry. Churches from all denominations joined in the early 1970s, and the broader community also got involved. ECHO was incorporated, obtained an office and hired its first Executive Director in 1975. ECHO has been providing food for over 46 years, as well as housing, transportation and other essential services for over 40 years.

ECHO's Mission. *ECHO seeks to help people help themselves through its programs and services, and to assist people in utilizing other existing services and programs in Rock County. It does not impose any theological or political value system.* ECHO receives 85% of its financial support from local churches, individuals, businesses, school and community groups, foundations, special events and 15% from government grants. We directly serve about 3,600 unduplicated HHs annually, which is about 13,000 people, some of whom come sporadically and others regularly. ECHO's funding use: 98% Direct Client Assistance and 2% Administration. Varying slightly each year, just a few of our client characteristics: *Income - 79% earn 0-30% County Median Income (CMI), 19% earn 31-50% CMI, 2% earn 51-80% CMI; Female Head of Household (HOH) - 71%; HHs have Children - 63%; HHs Paying > 50% Gross HH Income for Rent and Utilities – 67%; HHs with Elderly HOH – 15%.*

ECHO's Food Program. We offers over 30 services, including a variety of food services: Groceries and Commodities from Pantry; *Hunger Task Force* Senior Stockboxes; Community Meals; Baby Food/Formula and

Ensure for Adults; Emergency Food Vouchers; Farmers Market Certificates; Thanksgiving groceries; Christmas Day Dinner. Totals aren't done yet for 2015, but in 2014, we provided about *3.6 million meals* to our clients. We receive about 100,000 pounds of food monthly from individuals, churches, schools, local food drives, and from businesses. Over 560 Senior Stock Boxes monthly (40# each, another 22,000# monthly) are provided and delivered by *Hunger Task Force, Milwaukee*, with no charges for handling or delivery. Farmers, food manufacturers, food processors, farmers markets and local stores provide free food to us, regularly. Many deliver that food to us, and we pick up food, either with our truck or a refrigerated truck lent to us. We purchase food from *Second Harvest, Madison*, monthly, and they charge for their handling services and delivery.

Senate Bill 474. I support helping farmers and food processing facilities donate excess and unmarketable farm and food producers to food banks (and food pantries). But, I have some concerns about **Senate Bill 474**.

Concern #1. I do not support awarding the entire *Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection* annual grant to a nonprofit organization that operates as a statewide association of food banks to work with the farms and food processors and pantries all over the entire state. This adds layers of complexity, distance, time and cost to the donation process. It also creates a lack of fairness and a monopoly. I recommend that this be changed to *regional food banks*, and could include large food pantries, which would still include *Second Harvest*, but also *Hunger Task Force*, which does an excellent job, and large pantries like ECHO, that know the local community best and have the capacity to handle this.

Concern #2. More importantly, I feel the way it is written now will lock out agencies like ECHO from local contributions, decreasing donations to us of free local goods and also decrease freshness. This adds distance, time and cost to the donation process. It also creates a lack of fairness and monopoly of donations. Policies and procedures can be imposed that serve the distant controlling entity, rather than the local food pantries and the needs of the people they serve, beyond the accountability needed. The decrease or ending of some of ECHO's access to free local donations, because of power grabs, has happened to us in the last several years, and the local donors didn't realize ECHO would have to start paying for those donations because of the change. I can give you specific examples – my contact information is on this memo that I am leaving with you, since my speaking time is limited at this hearing.

Concern #3. There is too much allowed for Administration. This is the work citizens already expect that we will be doing to help those in need, with their donations.

Thank You for your time listening to my input and that of others today. Thank You for your work in developing and reviewing this bill and others brought before you that to benefit the people of Wisconsin.

Karen Lusser