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May 15th, 2025

Assembly Committee on Public Benefit Reform  
Testimony on Assembly Bill 180

Thank you, Chairman Knodl and Members of the Assembly Committee on Public Benefit Reform for considering Assembly Bill (AB) 180. AB 180 is designed to improve the health outcomes for our Wisconsin residents who receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.

SNAP was established under the Food Stamp Act of 1964 and did not include any nutritional guidelines for purchasing items on SNAP. The Food Stamp Act of 1977 created eligibility requirements and streamlined the process to receive benefits. In the 2008 Farm Bill, the Food Stamp Program was renamed to SNAP. SNAP allows recipients to buy foods that have empty calories and no nutritional value which negatively impacts their health. Unhealthy items may seem convenient, appealing and cheaper, but there are many long-term health consequences. With 15% of Wisconsin students ages two to 17 being obese, there is a higher level of obesity in low-income families who receive SNAP benefits. In fact, about 20% of adults who are obese fall under low-income levels.

Under AB 180, recipients utilizing SNAP benefits will still receive the same amount of money; however, SNAP recipients will not be able to purchase soda & candy with their SNAP benefits. SNAP already has prohibition on products such as alcohol, tobacco, foods that are hot at the point of sale, and any nonfood items such as pet foods, cleaning supplies, paper products, hygiene items and cosmetics. SNAP participants consume 61% more sugar-sweetened beverages than those not on SNAP. Proving SNAP benefits have not helped people buy more fruits and vegetables, allowing for higher obesity due to the sugar contents.

In Wisconsin, 67% of SNAP recipients are on Medicaid and over half of Medicaid recipients are on pharmaceutical drugs. We are paying to feed chronic disease for people on SNAP. Then we pay for those people's pharmaceutical drugs. Taxpayers are paying both sides of the problem. Why are keeping our low-income citizens in a cycle of disease and dependency?

A Stanford Study shows that cutting out sugary soda from SNAP could prevent obesity in over 141,000 kids and type-2 diabetes in nearly 250,000 adults. Obesity is almost double among those enrolled in SNAP versus non-eligible people.

The United States spends \$15,000 per person on medicine, surgeries and managing disease. Could you imagine if we gave people \$15,000 a year to buy healthy food, gym membership and

exercise? Just imagine how many chronic illnesses we could prevent. By placing some boundaries on what can be purchased on SNAP, we are making changes to preventable diseases.

Public funds and taxpayer dollars should be used to uplift and support the well-being of our communities, not contribute to chronic disease and poor health. Fruits and vegetables have been found to be less expensive in comparison to junk foods such as candy. A pound of bananas is roughly \$ .59 where as one pound of candy is roughly \$3.50. Buying healthier foods does not normally cost more and has more beneficial outcomes. Yet, sugary drinks and candy alone account for 11% of SNAP spending. SNAP made people less food insecure, but it didn't support healthier lifestyles. Prohibiting candy and soda will ensure people can use their benefits for healthier, more nutritious food items.

Other states have had hearings on this similar bill where the American Heart Association (AHA) showed up and testified against the bill. AHA is about promoting healthy lifestyles and a healthy heart. AHA says it's worried about hurting SNAP participation and wants us to focus on education instead. AHA has promoted trans-fat-laden margarines as a 'heart healthy' alternative to butter. We now know that margarine has led to many cases of heart disease. PepsiCo still pays AHA to sit on its public health forums. AHA has partnered with many large food corporations raking in fees through their Heart-Check certification program. I'm starting to wonder who funds AHA programs and how much they really care about our citizens health.

Opponents argue redirecting access to certain foods on SNAP as paternalistic or overreaching. However, just as public health laws regulate safety in many areas, such as seatbelts or having non-smoking areas in public places. AB 180 acts in the interest of collective well-being and cost-effective governance. Parents can use their own money for treats rather than benefits appropriated by the government.

Most government money has strings attached to what the money can be used for, adding this provision is no different than the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). WIC is a similar program to SNAP; however, WIC has restrictions already in place. These unhealthy options allowed under SNAP currently promote unhealthy habits, especially for children.

I understand implementing the codes in at grocery stores and convenience stores may add extra work for store managers. I toured a local grocery store in my district and asked how implementing these codes into their system would work. They confirmed that it would be a one-time upfront implementation, but very doable. When new products and flavors come out, they already need to add the product to the system. They update their codes each week for sales.

Nine states have introduced similar legislation to AB 180 with Indiana signing their bill into law last month. This is not a red or blue state issue, this is a health issue. Not a single state in the US has adult obesity rates lower than 40%. State governments are recognizing that unhealthy

populations cause more expensive health costs in the future. By taking measures to prevent chronic diseases, we can lower our health costs expenses.

Thank you again, Chair and Members of the Committee, for allowing me to testify on AB 180. Join me and the majority of likely voters who agree in prohibiting soft drinks and candy under SNAP benefits. It is imperative government assistance programs do not facilitate the consumption of harmful, additive-filled foods, but instead support healthy, sustainable food choices.



# CHRIS KAPENGA

WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR

## Testimony on Assembly Bill 180

Assembly Committee on Public Benefit Reform

Thursday, May 15, 2025

Thank you, Chairman Knodl and committee members, for holding a hearing on Assembly Bill 180. The Senate is in session, so I won't be able to present my testimony in person. I would also like to thank Representative Moses for his work on this bill in the Assembly.

SNAP, or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, is a federal benefit program, created with the intent to provide qualifying low-income families with help in order to afford nutritious foods. In Wisconsin, the program is FoodShare, where it's administered by Wisconsin's DHS. Through SNAP, the federal government pays the benefits for FoodShare, while the state and federal government split the administrative cost.

While the aim was well-intentioned, the SNAP program has lost much of its original purpose. Today, recipients of the program can use SNAP dollars to purchase virtually any food item at the grocery store – candy bars, liters and cans of soda, you name it.

According to the USDA, soda is the number one item purchased with SNAP benefits. And according to a recent article in the *Wall Street Journal*, more food-stamp money is spent on soda and sweets than other foods, including fruits, vegetables, eggs, pasta, beans, and rice combined.

If we are to get serious as a country about our health problems, then we need to also look squarely at the means of how people are getting the foods and drinks that lead to obesity and other health issues that plague Americans.

This bill targets this problem by requiring DHS to apply for a federal waiver from the U.S Department of Agriculture to modify our SNAP program to prohibit the purchase of candy and soft drinks with FoodShare benefits. Under this legislation, DHS must seek any waiver necessary for this to happen.

This bill doesn't ban people from buying sweets and soda with their own money – they just won't be able to use SNAP dollars, paid for by the taxpayer, to purchase them. Why should taxpayers fit the bill for millions in candy and soda under a program whose aim to help the impoverished afford nutritious meals?

This bill is the right change at the right time. Around the country, other states are introducing – and passing – similar legislation to the bill in front of you. And it doesn't just make sense for the taxpayer, but also for the health and future of our nation.

Thank you again, Chairman Knodl and committee members, for your time and attention on this important issue. I would greatly appreciate your support for this bill.





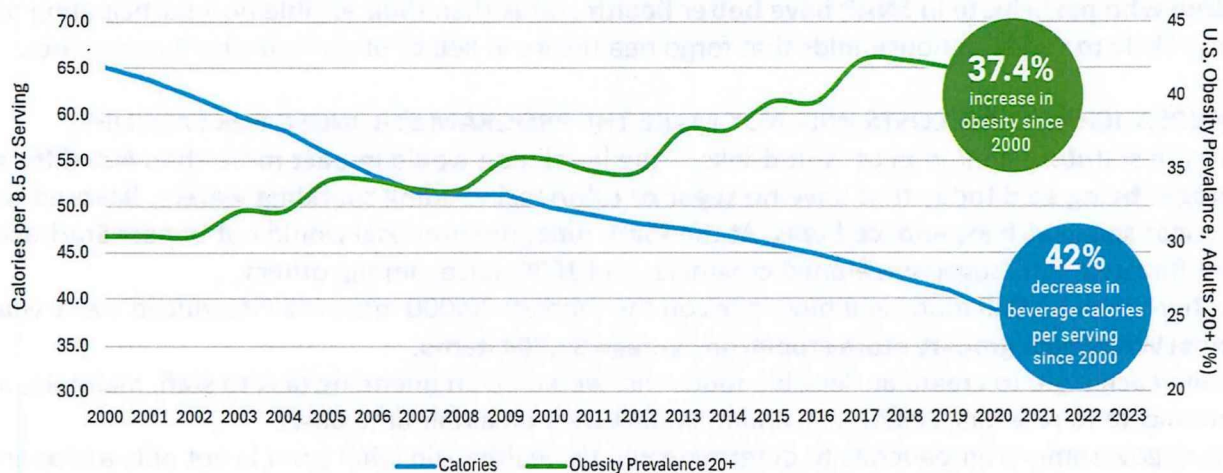
**Testimony before the Assembly Committee on Public Benefit Reform  
2025 Assembly Bill 180  
Kelly McDowell, Executive Secretary, Wisconsin Beverage Association  
May 15, 2025**

Good afternoon Chairperson Knodl and members of the Assembly Committee on Public Benefit Reform. On behalf of the members of the Wisconsin Beverage Association (WBA), I respectfully appear before you today in **opposition to Assembly Bill 180**. The legislation directs the Department of Health Services (DHS) to apply for a waiver from the USDA to bar the purchase of soda and candy through the SNAP, or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. As proposed, DHS would be required to resubmit the waiver annually until it is granted.

America's beverage companies – **WHO PROVIDE SOME 5,000 WISCONSIN MANUFACTURING AND DISTRIBUTION JOBS** – take seriously their responsibility to their consumers. They believe their consumers deserve choices and clear information to choose what's right for them and their families. They are proud of the progress they've made in reducing beverage calories in the American diet. So, it's important to set the record straight.

**BEVERAGES ARE NOT DRIVING OBESITY IN THE UNITED STATES.**

While CDC data shows adult obesity is up 37.4% since 2000, full-calorie soda sales are down 22.9% and **beverage calories per serving are down 42%**. If the two were connected, obesity rates should have gone down with the decline in soda consumption.



In fact, calories from sugar-sweetened beverages are a small part of the American diet. **When consumption of all sugar-sweetened beverages are combined, they account for less than 6% of calories in the American diet**, according to USDA analysis of government data.

The reality is the causes of obesity are complex, and no single food is to blame. The beverage industry has done more than any other industry to empower Americans with more choices with less sugar and clear information. Through the **Balance Calories Initiative**, companies have introduced hundreds of low and zero-sugar beverages and prioritized them in their marketing to encourage consumers to try them.

## SNAP AND NON-SNAP HOUSEHOLDS MAKE THE SAME PURCHASING DECISIONS.

- According to the USDA, **95% of SNAP purchases are for food items** – not beverages. They add, “There were no major differences in the expenditure patterns of SNAP and non-SNAP households.”
- **SNAP households spent 5 cents per dollar on soft drinks and non-SNAP households spent 4 cents per dollar**, according to the latest USDA report (2016). That’s a penny difference.
- While data is essential, it is important to note that the latest USDA data available is almost ten years ago and **does not reflect the 42% decrease in beverage calories per serving nor the 22.9% decrease in full-calorie soda sales since 2000**. Again, during that time adult obesity increased by 37.4%.
- In addition, the USDA cautioned that relying on rankings of SNAP purchases is misleading. USDA says a small difference in the expenditure share of a grocery item can lead to a major difference in the ranking of that commodity. For example, USDA pointed out that the difference in expenditures between lunch meat, ranked 10<sup>th</sup>, and non-refrigerated juice, ranked 69<sup>th</sup>, is one cent per dollar.
- With respect to outdated data, the claim that “children and families on SNAP consume 43% more of these beverages than those not on the program” is **based on a study that uses data that is nearly 25 years old**. **It is not an accurate picture of what people are consuming today**. More importantly, this point ignores the central finding of this study. On the very first page in the section: “What This Study Adds,” the authors state, **“SNAP participation was not associated with childhood obesity.”**

## RESEARCH SHOWS THE HEALTH BENEFITS ASSOCIATED WITH SNAP PARTICIPATION.

- Some proponents of restrictions purport that high rates of obesity and other chronic diseases among SNAP participants contribute to rising health care costs. Evidence<sup>1</sup> shows that, **“Actually, SNAP reduces medical spending.”**
- Compared to low-income non-SNAP participants, **adults in SNAP have average annual healthcare costs that are \$1,400 to \$5,000 lower on average**.
- **Adults who had access to SNAP during childhood** exhibit lower adult obesity risk and other lower risk of chronic health conditions such as cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes.
- **Children who participate in SNAP have better health status** than their eligible non-participating peers and are less likely to reside in households that forgo healthcare in lieu of other household necessities.

## ADDED BUREAUCRACY AND COSTS WILL NOT MAKE THE PROGRAM STRONGER FOR FAMILIES.

- Under the statutory definition of “soft drinks,”<sup>2</sup> the legislation would **impact more than 400 different beverages being sold today that have no sugar or calories, including sparkling waters, flavored waters, zero-sugar sports drinks, and iced teas**. At the same time, the proposal would not impact Starbucks cold drinks, flavored milk, sugar-sweetened creamers, and 100% juice, among others.
- Also, there are 650,000 foods and beverages on the market; 20,000 more are introduced every year, **and a typical Wisconsin grocery store stocks on average 31,704 items**.
- Allowing each state to create an “eligible foods” list would be an unending task to staff, maintain, and communicate to retailers, customers, and manufacturers on a real-time basis.
- Allowing government bureaucrats to determine what’s healthy and what’s not is not only a slippery slope, but it will dramatically increase costs. A USDA study estimated that a similar administrative effort would require an initial investment of \$400 million and \$600 million a year after that.
- The DHS fiscal estimate<sup>3</sup> demonstrates the significant state burden to implement the provisions of the legislation both for the state and for retailers, as well as to ensure retailer compliance:
  - FIS, the state’s electronic benefit (EBT) vendor, would need to build a database of Universal Product

<sup>1</sup> Safeguarding SNAP as an Effective Antihunger Program: Myths and Potential Harms of Adding Diet Quality as a Core Objective | AJPH | Vol. 115 Issue 1

<sup>2</sup> Section 77.51(17w), WI Stats.: “Soft drink” means a beverage that contains less than 0.5 percent of alcohol and that contains natural or artificial sweeteners. “Soft drink” does not include a beverage that contains milk or milk products; soy, rice, or similar milk substitutes; or more than 50 percent vegetable or fruit juice by volume.

<sup>3</sup> ab180\_dhs.pdf

Codes (UPCs) into the functionality of FIS's EBT system to identify candy and soft drink products and maintain that database on an ongoing basis as new products enter the market. FIS would also need to make numerous other changes including changes at its call center and to software used in point of sale (POS) systems. The one-time cost of these changes is estimated at \$6,055,800 all funds (\$3,027,900 GPR). The ongoing cost to maintain the changes is estimated at \$60,000 all funds (\$30,000 GPR) annually.

- The estimate assumes DHS would not provide funding to food retailers to offset implementation costs they may incur. Retailers would likely experience additional costs such as upgrades to their POS systems. Retailers who do not have the hardware to scan the UPCs of each item might need to check items that may or may not meet the statutory definitions of candy and soft drink against the FIS database manually.
- As a condition of federal approval, FNS (USDA's Food Nutrition Service) may require DHS to ensure retailer compliance and enforcement. In that event, DHS's Office of the Inspector General (OIG) may require additional position authority and related funding. The exact number of additional positions necessary to enforce this bill is indeterminate at this time. The number of required positions would likely be developed during the approval process with FNS.
- While the fiscal note assumes a federal share of costs, the House Agriculture committee is proposing a number of SNAP policy changes, including reducing the federal government share of SNAP administrative costs from 50% to 25%.<sup>4</sup>

#### PROPOSED SNAP RESTRICTIONS FAIL TO ADDRESS ROOT CAUSES OF CHRONIC DISEASE DISPARITIES

- Evidence<sup>5</sup> does not support the claim that implementing restrictions on SNAP purchases will improve health. Instead, research shows that **imposing nutritional restrictions will interfere with the primary function of SNAP—reducing hunger by increasing purchasing power—without addressing the root causes of chronic disease disparities.** “SNAP effectively reduces food insecurity and prevents hunger, particularly among households with children and those facing extreme disadvantage.”
- In 2024, **minors represented 33.9% of beneficiaries, while 47.3% of recipients were elderly, blind, or disabled individuals. Veteran recipients totaled 18,716, or 5.8% of the state's veteran population.**
- **Importantly, restrictions on SNAP purchases do not address food insecurity, nor the reality that many low-income, working families live in food deserts,** where access to fresh, affordable produce and protein is limited due to the geographic area lacking full grocery stores. As such, corner convenience stores may be all that is available to residents who also lack transportation options.

#### EMPOWERING CONSUMERS WITH CHOICE & INFORMATION IS THE BETTER WAY.

- Expanding – not restricting – choice is the best way to support American families in achieving balance and improving health.
- Americans agree. On the question of whether those receiving FoodShare should be allowed to purchase soft drinks and other sugar-sweetened beverages with their benefit, a recent Public Opinion Strategies poll found that **almost two-thirds (64%) of Americans believe food stamps should be allowed to purchase these beverage products.** Nearly six out of ten (58%) of those who voted for President Trump in the 2024 Election say **soda and sugar sweetened beverages should be allowed to be purchased with food stamps,** including majorities of other subgroups who were part of the President's expanded coalition of voters.

Thank you for the opportunity to share WBA member concerns and opposition to Assembly Bill 180. They too want everyone to lead healthier lives, which is why they have transformed the beverage aisle to deliver more choices with less sugar and clear calorie information. We hope you will consider the issues that have been raised in opposing passage of this legislation.

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<sup>4</sup> [Republicans Outdo Themselves in Food Stamp Cuts - The American Prospect](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Safeguarding SNAP as an Effective Antihunger Program: Myths and Potential Harms of Adding Diet Quality as a Core Objective | AJPH | Vol. 115 Issue 1](#)



# Delivering for Wisconsin

The Wisconsin beverage industry plays an important role in our economy by providing good-paying, family-supporting careers, contributing significant tax dollars, and making generous charitable donations to improve our communities. We have roots in every community across our state and work hard to deliver a positive impact for the customers, consumers and neighbors we serve.

## Our Facilities in Wisconsin



**5,016**

BEVERAGE  
INDUSTRY JOBS



**102**

MANUFACTURING PLANTS  
AND DISTRIBUTION  
FACILITIES



**84,258**

JOBS SUPPORTED  
BY BEVERAGE  
INDUSTRY



**\$5.1 Billion**

DIRECT ECONOMIC  
IMPACT



**\$478.0 Million**

WAGES AND BENEFITS



**\$359.8 Million**

CONTRIBUTED IN  
STATE TAXES



**\$669.3 Million**

CONTRIBUTED IN  
FEDERAL TAXES



**\$51.9 Million**

CHARITABLE  
DONATIONS

WE ARE AMERICAN COMPANIES MAKING AMERICAN PRODUCTS  
WITH AMERICAN WORKERS IN AMERICA'S HOMETOWNS

Prepared by John Dunham & Associates, February 2025





**Testimony of**

**Michael Semmann**

**On Behalf of the**

**Wisconsin Grocers Association (WGA)**

**Before the**

**Assembly Committee on Public Benefit Reform**

**Assembly Bill 180**

**May 15, 2025**

Chair Knodl and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak before the committee today in opposition to Assembly Bill 180 relating to requiring the Department of Health Services to seek any necessary waiver on FoodShare benefits.

The Wisconsin Grocers Association (WGA) applauds the authors of Assembly Bill 180 for their commitment to improving the health and well-being of Wisconsin residents. The desire to promote healthier outcomes for individuals and families—particularly those facing food insecurity—is both admirable and necessary. Addressing diet-related health challenges is a goal we all share, and I appreciate the authors' willingness to tackle these complex issues.

Federal and state nutrition programs are a critical resource to struggling families, and Wisconsin's grocery stores are an indispensable partner in these programs. Retailers take pride in participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) program to support their communities and local families in need (this program is called FoodShare in Wisconsin). Making several improvements to this successful program can help increase retailer participation and increase food access for SNAP beneficiaries. Wisconsin's grocers are committed to advancing access to healthy food in an equitable manner and the following suggested program improvements would help them do so.

One of the many reasons this program is successful is the ease of processing SNAP transactions for retailers and beneficiaries who can make their own decisions on which food items to purchase for their household. This choice ensures families can shop with the same dignity as any other grocery customer.

Restricting the choices of SNAP customers to items approved by the USDA will increase program implementation costs for the government and discourage business participation in the program. The government will need to categorize more than 600,000 products and thousands more each year to create and maintain a food code to determine what foods can be purchased with SNAP. Yearly, approximately

20,00 new food products are introduced into the marketplace, and a typical Wisconsin grocery store stocks on average 31,704 items. Grocery store cashiers would have a new tier of regulations as the food police telling parents what they can and cannot feed their families.

Varying state laws, regardless of the policy issues they attempt to address, would undo the efficiencies that grocers, states, and USDA worked in concert to put together. A patchwork of state regulations introduces confusion and uncertainty as retailers, many of whom are multi-state, would be forced to comply with varying state definitions of “eligible” products under FoodShare. Moreover, there are significant policy questions around which entity would make the product determination, maintain a list of ineligible products broken down to the subcategory product level (i.e., a UPC database), and keep that list updated.

The proposal would create complexities at checkout. One of the greatest advancements of the current system is that the coding of eligible items is downloaded into store systems electronically to avoid human error. If customers were unaware of the changes in the eligibility of certain products in a particular state, retail checkout lines would be delayed as cashiers tried to explain the changes to customers. Also, because FoodShare beneficiary purchases are most often multi-tender, what’s restricted with one form of tender will just end up being paid for by cash or credit. Grocery clerks would be put in the difficult position of enforcing what people can and cannot buy with FoodShare, complicating transactions and creating uncomfortable situations for our customers. In Wisconsin, some 19,000 FoodShare beneficiaries are veterans, while roughly half are elderly, blind, or disabled residents.

We believe it is critical to *educate all of our customers about healthy eating, not just single out one subset of shoppers*. Many grocers work hard to provide nutritional benefits and healthy eating information without government mandates, because they know it is the right thing to do. Our members work with local and county health departments and the WI Department of Health on education and nutrition programs.

The current flexibility is key to the program’s success. The dietary needs of the SNAP population are diverse and no one diet would be appropriate for all participants, leading to the need for different meal plans and nutrition counseling for each participant in turn increasing the cost of the program. SNAP choice allows the program to remain flexible during a supply chain shortage and declared emergencies. Restrictions would limit the program’s ability to react to the changing needs of the community.

Restrictions will harm participants, taxpayers, and small community businesses. For these reasons, WGA opposes the effort to restrict purchases and limit choices of SNAP recipients through waiver legislation.

***The Wisconsin Grocers Association (WGA)*** is a non-profit trade association established in 1900 to represent independent grocers and grocery chains, warehouses & brokers, vendors, suppliers, and manufacturers before all levels of government. The WGA provides educational and networking opportunities, leadership training, public affairs, and compliance information for its membership.

*WGA and its membership have a significant Economic Impact in the state of Wisconsin. The WGA represents nearly 350 independent grocers with multiple locations across the state, more than 200 retail grocery chain stores, warehouses and distributors, convenience stores, food brokers and suppliers. Wisconsin grocers employ over 30,000 people with over \$1 billion in payroll and generate more than \$12 billion in annual sales in Wisconsin resulting in approximately \$800 million in state sales tax revenue. (Data provided by The Food Institute).*

Sources:

SNAP

[FMI | Facts About SNAP](#)

[New Economic Data Underscores SNAP's Critical Role in Supporting American Jobs and Local Economies - National Grocers Association](#)

Industry

[Grocery Shopping Stats: Where, When & How Much We Spend](#)

[FMI | Food Industry Facts](#)

[Food Marketing and Labeling | Food System Primer](#)

[Successful new product development: an unsolvable equation?](#)

Dear Representative Knodl, Maxey, and the members of the committee on Public Benefit Reform. My name is Anneka Bengston and I am here today to speak in favor of AB 180.

Eleven percent of food stamp spending goes towards sugary drinks and candy; these are items that offer little to no nutritional value and contribute to serious health issues. Shockingly, SNAP participants consume 61% more sugar-sweetened beverages compared to non-participants. This isn't just about individual choices; it's about the responsible use of taxpayer dollars and the well-being of our communities.

We know the consequences. Higher rates of diabetes, heart disease, and other chronic illnesses place a heavy burden on individuals, families, and our healthcare system. In fact, banning these purchases could prevent hundreds of thousands of cases of diabetes and tens of thousands of deaths from heart attacks and strokes, saving billions in healthcare costs.

It's alarming that 72% of SNAP recipients are also enrolled in Medicaid, which means taxpayers are essentially paying twice – first to subsidize the purchase of unhealthy foods and then again to cover the costs of the resulting health issues. This bill isn't about denying anyone food; it's about encouraging the purchase of nutritious options. As the data shows, a basket of healthy foods like fruits, vegetables, and protein can cost less than a selection of sugary snacks and soda. This isn't a punishment; it's an opportunity to support healthier habits.

Some may raise concerns about access and affordability. These are valid points, and we must work to ensure that healthy options are readily available and affordable for all. This bill is a crucial first step, signaling our commitment to prioritizing health. It's time we align our food assistance programs with our public health goals. Thank you for your time.





Good Morning! My name is Dr. Kathleen Findlay. I am a physician from Baldwin, Wisconsin and am here in support of Assembly Bill 180 to ensure that Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits are used to provide nutritional food for those needing supplemental support.

I have always had an interest in preventing chronic disease. The impact of nutrition on this became very real to me when I was practicing as a Family Medicine Physician in the United States Army. I was serving as the officer in charge of a troop medical clinic from 2008-2011. This clinic served the basic training population and one of my responsibilities was to recommend separation for those young men and women who did not meet the standards of medical fitness to serve. I found myself having to recommend separation for many individuals due to the effects of unhealthy nutrition. This was heartbreaking for me, as these young people had volunteered to serve in our military at a time when they knew they would be going to war. This experience changed the trajectory of my career.

After leaving the Army, I taught Public Health for 7 years and Nutrition was a large part of this. My interest in understanding how to better prevent chronic disease led me to obtain board certification in Integrative Medicine and Lifestyle Medicine. I now practice Lifestyle Medicine exclusively, working with patients to make sustainable change to improve their health. Over the last 5 years, I have worked with a team at Western Wisconsin Health in Baldwin to create a Lifestyle Medicine program that supports all patients. As the only program of this type in the region, we have supported over 300 patients to make sustainable change. I am privileged to



have both a Health and Wellness coach and Dietitian on my team, both who agree

wholeheartedly that nutrition is fundamental to good health and Food is Medicine!

About 95% of my current practice includes patients that are seeking to lose weight to improve their overall health and reduce chronic diseases. The focus for nutrition for many of these individuals often begins with decreasing sugar-sweetened beverages and treats. Even before we see changes to their metabolic measurements such as weight, blood pressure, and labs, my patients remark that they have less pain, more energy, and improved concentration. While I do not create a restrictive nutrition pattern for patients, they will frequently endorse that they chose not to drink pop or eat “junk” as they now notice how bad they feel when they do. I see very few children, but I routinely hear from those patients with children that their nutritional changes are having a positive impact on their children as well. Furthermore, my pediatric colleagues report improvement in attention, behaviors, and sleep with a reduction of pop and other beverages high in sugar.

Refined sugar is one of the most inflammatory substances that we put into our bodies.

Inflammation is the basis of all our chronic diseases, including diabetes, heart disease, liver disease, and so many more. Additionally, for proper nutrition, we need to consume real food—those things that grow on plants. Therefore, consumption of soda and candy does not support good health, in fact these substances make some of the greatest contribution to poor health in our nation. Our medical system is already overwhelmed with chronic disease care, and this continued consumption only increases rates of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and some cancers. Additionally, lower-income families are disproportionately affected by these diseases, as numerous studies have shown higher rates of chronic disease in zip codes with greater





socioeconomic disadvantages. 72% of SNAP recipients are also on Medicaid, meaning taxpayers are paying twice—once for junk food subsidies and again for the subsequent medical bills. The government has responsibility to support health, not subsidize future disease.

The USDA website states that “SNAP provides food benefits to low-income families to supplement their grocery budget, so they can afford the nutritious food essential to health and well-being.” However, USDA statistics further demonstrate that soda is the #1 item purchased with SNAP benefits and purchase of sweetened beverages, desserts, and candy exceed the program’s combined sales of fruits and vegetables by \$400 million per year. There is no nutritional value in soda . Additionally, SNAP households consume 43% more sugary drinks than similar low-income households not on SNAP. Clearly, SNAP benefits are being used to purchase items that are the antithesis of nutritious food. There are already purchase restrictions for other unhealthy items with SNAP benefits. Food is medicine and nutritious food is the building block of good health. Help me, help our communities, by passing Assembly Bill 180 requiring the Department of Health Services to seek any necessary waiver to prohibit the purchase of candy or soft drinks with FoodShare benefits.



Date: May 15, 2025

To: Committee on Public Benefit Reform

From: Amanda Martinez, Senior Policy Analyst; William Parke-Sutherland, Government Affairs Director; Alia Stevenson, Deputy Director

**RE: Opposition to Assembly Bill 180/Senate Bill 154**

Kids Forward strongly opposes AB180/SB154, which seek to restrict the use of SNAP benefits. These proposed restrictions that target recipients of SNAP are harmful and misguided, and do not address systemic barriers, instead it takes away freedom of food choice from families.

According to a USDA study,<sup>1</sup> families using SNAP benefits are no more or less likely to buy candy/soft drinks than families who aren't using SNAP. Banning certain foods likely won't change consumption, but it will increase the administrative cost. All foods can be part of a healthy diet when consumed in moderation and in appropriate portion sizes, as a result no specific food should be banned to purchase by SNAP recipients.

Limiting what people can buy with SNAP creates a dangerous precedent. Restrictions could reinforce negative stereotypes about SNAP recipients and potentially create barriers to access for those who need assistance. In reality, SNAP and non-SNAP recipients spend a similar amount on the purchases of soft drinks. According to Brookings, "Among the spending observed in the USDA study, about 5 cents of each dollar went to the purchase of soft drinks. This rate is similar to non-SNAP households, which spend an average of 4 percent of their grocery dollars on soft drinks."<sup>2</sup> This sends a message of mistrust and judgment toward low-income individuals, suggesting that they are not capable of making their own choices. This kind of policing of personal behavior is unfair and stigmatizing; and undermines the program's dignity and autonomy.

Moreover, these restrictions would place a significant administrative burden and costs on retailers, many of whom already operate on tight margins. Categorizing foods as "healthy" or "unhealthy" would be complex and costly, especially with the vast number of products on the market. Restrictions like these will be difficult to implement in practice because there are no clear standards in defining goods.

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<sup>1</sup> "Foods Typically Purchased by Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Households," November 2016, USDA Food & Nutrition Service, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/research/snap/foods-typically-purchased-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap-households>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/pros-and-cons-of-restricting-snap-purchases/>



If participating in SNAP becomes too complicated or costly, some stores—especially small, local businesses—may choose to stop accepting SNAP altogether.<sup>3</sup> That would reduce access to food for people who are already facing food insecurity, making it even harder for them to feed themselves and their families.

Food insecurity is a serious issue. Both Wisconsin's urban and rural communities are too often in food deserts where healthy food is expensive and hard to access. We should be working to expand access and reduce stigma—not create more barriers. Instead of restricting purchases, efforts should focus on addressing the underlying issue of affordability, particularly the high cost of healthy foods.

Instead of policing low-income families, Wisconsin legislators should invest in increased funds to programs that reduce food insecurity and improve health, such as SNAP and Medicaid. Please vote no on AB 180 because it will take freedom and food away from needy families and increase administrative complexity for the thousands of retailers who participate in the program. Please reach out to [wparkesutherland@kidsforward.org](mailto:wparkesutherland@kidsforward.org) with questions, follow up, or request for more information. Thank you.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/snap-cuts-are-likely-to-harm-more-than-27000-retailers-nationwide/>



May 14, 2025

Chair Daniel Knodl and Members  
Wisconsin Assembly Public Benefit  
Reform Committee

**RE: Testimony on AB 180 – FoodShare Purchase Changes**

On behalf of the Alliance of Wisconsin Retailers and our members across the state, thank you for the opportunity to share feedback on **Assembly Bill 180** (AB 180), which would require the Department of Health Services (DHS) to seek a federal waiver to prohibit the purchase of candy and soft drinks using FoodShare benefits.

Wisconsin retailers recognize the intent behind the bill and share the goal of increasing access to nutritious food while helping customers make informed, healthy choices.

**Many of our members already offer voluntary programs that encourage healthier lifestyles**, including discounts on fresh produce and nutritious products, online SNAP purchasing, mobile ordering, and affordable delivery options.

As the Committee considers this proposal, we would like to highlight several potential implementation and operational challenges. **A SNAP product restriction waiver would require retailers to navigate significant and costly changes**, ranging from point-of-sale system updates and adjustments to online ordering platforms to employee training and new compliance procedures. These requirements can differ widely across retailers, making uniform implementation difficult.

Further complicating implementation is the **lack of federal consistency** in how these types of waivers are handled. Retailers authorized to accept SNAP across multiple states would have to navigate state-specific rules, conflicting product definitions, varied enforcement standards, and shifting implementation timelines. This patchwork approach creates administrative challenges that risk limiting access to food, especially as the **federal government is considering a similar nationwide policy**.

If Wisconsin does move forward with this waiver, we strongly urge the Legislature to consider the following:

1. **Align with other states** to avoid creating unique and duplicative compliance challenges.

2. **Establish a clear implementation date** no sooner than July 1, 2026, and at least one year after enactment, to allow adequate time for technology adjustments and public education.
3. **Provide an enforcement grace period** at least through January 1, 2027, or at least six months after implementation, to give retailers time to address any issues without penalty.
4. **Make financial assistance** available for SNAP-authorized vendors to offset the costs of compliance.
5. **Clarify definitions** of what is considered a restricted product, both in stores and online, and how these items should be flagged within EBT systems.
6. **Support retailers and frontline staff** by launching a public awareness campaign, including signage and resources, so SNAP participants understand the changes and where to go for help.

Lastly, we raise a technical consideration: if restrictions are applied only within Wisconsin borders, participants could still use their FoodShare cards **online or across state lines** to purchase prohibited items. For a waiver to be effective, we believe it must be enforced via **Bank Identification Numbers (BINs)** tied to EBT cards, not just geography.

Retailers want to be good partners in helping families eat well, but we also need **clarity, consistency, and adequate time** to implement changes thoughtfully and without disruption to service or access.

We appreciate your commitment to this discussion and stand ready to work with lawmakers, DHS, and the federal government on common-sense improvements to the SNAP program that support both health outcomes and retail feasibility.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

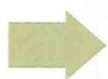
*Bruce Nustad*

Bruce Nustad  
President  
(608) 455-6458  
alliance@WIretailers.org

# MAKE WISCONSIN HEALTHY AGAIN

## BAN CANDY AND SODA IN TAXPAYER-FUNDED FOOD STAMPS

The food stamp program is supposed to fight hunger and provide nutritious diets for low-income households. But the program is failing to do so—*instead, it's fueling disease.*



**The food stamp program is the nation's largest nutrition assistance program.**



**42 MILLION**  
people enrolled



**\$113 BILLION**  
in taxpayer  
dollars per year



**68%** of all USDA  
**NUTRITION**  
**SPENDING**



**The top foods purchased with food stamps offer little to no nutrition.**

- **SODA IS THE NUMBER ONE COMMODITY PURCHASED WITH FOOD STAMPS!**  
11% of ALL food stamp spending is spent on sweetened beverages and candy alone.
- Children on food stamps consume 43 percent more sugar-sweetened beverages than nonparticipants of similar income levels.
- More is spent on junk food (soda, candy, snacks, ice cream, cakes) than on staples like fruit, vegetables, eggs, pasta, beans, and rice.



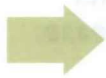
***Estimated FY2025 spending by category***

*Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture*



# MAKE WISCONSIN HEALTHY AGAIN

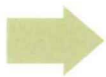
## BAN CANDY AND SODA IN TAXPAYER-FUNDED FOOD STAMPS



### **The result: The food stamp program isn't improving American diets.**

*America is facing a health crisis, and the food stamp program is making it worse.*

- Adults and children on food stamps have higher rates of obesity and a higher risk of chronic disease than nonparticipants.
- Nearly 75 percent of American adults are overweight or obese, while one in five Americans between ages two and 19 are obese.
- One in every two Americans has or is at risk of developing diabetes.



### **Taxpayer-funded junk food in food stamps is creating a public health crisis.**

- Making junk food easier to purchase is creating a cascading crisis of obesity and chronic illness—and food stamp enrollees are disproportionately affected.
- 72% of food stamp enrollees are also covered by government health insurance, mostly through the Medicaid program.



### **The solution: Wisconsin should immediately request a waiver to ban junk food in food stamps.**

*Other states are already implementing junk food bans in food stamps  
...and more will soon follow!*



## *The Bottom Line*

**Wisconsin must realign its food stamp program with real nutrition to fight hunger, not fuel disease, and BAN SODA AND CANDY IN THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM.**

## **John Ramthun's Testimony in support of Assembly Bill 180**

Thursday, May 15, 2025

Thank you, Chairman Knodl, Vice-Chair Maxey, and Members of the Committee. I appreciate the chance to be here today.

My name is John Ramthun, and I am honored to serve as the Executive Director of 6:8 Ministries, which works every day to end poverty by inspiring and equipping families and our community to thrive.

I am here to testify in support of Assembly Bill 180, which would end the use of FoodShare benefits for purchasing soft drinks and candy.

I believe in the FoodShare program and its purpose. It is a vital safety net. But anyone who has worked in community-based charitable service can tell you that the program has, at times, lost sight of its mission.

The original goal of the food stamp program was to help people in need access a more nutritious diet. Candy and soda provide no essential nutrients—just empty calories. Funding these items does not advance the purpose of FoodShare. It does not promote health, well-being, or financial stability.

At 6:8, we see the long-term impact of food choices in the lives of families we serve. Through our Circles Initiative, which is a long-term approach to end poverty permanently in our community. Each week, local families working to overcome poverty (Circle Leaders) meet with community volunteers (Allies) over dinner and programming. During these meetings, Circle Leaders work on their goals toward self-reliance. Over time, incomes improve, debt and public assistance decrease and necessary relationships are built. Our mission is to inspire and equip families and communities to resolve poverty and thrive. We believe no one should live in poverty and if given the right tools and support - economic stability can be achieved.

After hearing about this proposed bill, we held a Big View roundtable last Monday to discuss it as a community. The group included current and former FoodShare recipients and others who have never used the program. We conducted an anonymous before-and-after survey and found that a clear majority, across all groups, agreed: that taxpayers should not be covering soft drinks and candy, that soft drinks and candy should not be allowed to be purchased with Food Share.



One young mother—currently living in poverty and receiving FoodShare—shared this:

*"I grew up in a very poor family, and a big reason for our poor diet choices was how easy it was to buy unhealthy food. It's been really hard for me as an adult to teach my kids new habits, especially when junk food is so easy to buy with my card. This weekly group has helped me, but it would be so much easier if I could just tell my kids, 'we can't buy those items.'"*

A recurring theme in our discussion was the importance of education and support if this bill moves forward. A thoughtful transition period would allow participants and retailers to adapt well.

On a personal note, this bill affects my own family. My wife Sarah and I lead our nonprofit full time but choose to live below the poverty line so that more resources can go directly to those we serve. As a result, we receive FoodShare and, yes, we use it to buy soda or candy as treats for our boys. We enjoy those treats, but we don't feel good about using public funds for them. We agree: taxpayers shouldn't be paying for our junk food.

I'm hopeful that, in the long term, this change could even shift what's stocked in stores—especially in low-income neighborhoods. If customers are less often buying things from the soda and candy shelves and more often buying items off other shelves, those healthier shelves may need to get larger and the junk food shelves may have to shrink.

We believe in the generosity of this country. But generosity should serve people's long-term health and dignity—not fund addictive and harmful junk food.

This bill simply asks the Department of Health Services to request a waiver from the USDA, which is required under federal law before any change like this can be made. If granted, Wisconsin could lead the way in restoring integrity to a program meant to nourish—not harm—the families it serves.

Thank you for considering this step toward healthier families and a more accountable use of taxpayer funds.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.





Date: May 15, 2025

To: Committee on Public Benefit Reform

From: Amanda Martinez, Senior Policy Analyst; William Parke-Sutherland, Government Affairs Director; Alia Stevenson, Deputy Director

**RE: Opposition to Assembly Bill 180/Senate Bill 154**

Kids Forward strongly opposes AB180/SB154, which seek to restrict the use of SNAP benefits. These proposed restrictions that target recipients of SNAP are harmful and misguided, and do not address systemic barriers, instead it takes away freedom of food choice from families.

According to a USDA study,<sup>1</sup> families using SNAP benefits are no more or less likely to buy candy/soft drinks than families who aren't using SNAP. Banning certain foods likely won't change consumption, but it will increase the administrative cost. All foods can be part of a healthy diet when consumed in moderation and in appropriate portion sizes, as a result no specific food should be banned to purchase by SNAP recipients.

Limiting what people can buy with SNAP creates a dangerous precedent. Restrictions could reinforce negative stereotypes about SNAP recipients and potentially create barriers to access for those who need assistance. In reality, SNAP and non-SNAP recipients spend a similar amount on the purchases of soft drinks. According to Brookings, "Among the spending observed in the USDA study, about 5 cents of each dollar went to the purchase of soft drinks. This rate is similar to non-SNAP households, which spend an average of 4 percent of their grocery dollars on soft drinks."<sup>2</sup> This sends a message of mistrust and judgment toward low-income individuals, suggesting that they are not capable of making their own choices. This kind of policing of personal behavior is unfair and stigmatizing; and undermines the program's dignity and autonomy.

Moreover, these restrictions would place a significant administrative burden and costs on retailers, many of whom already operate on tight margins. Categorizing foods as "healthy" or "unhealthy" would be complex and costly, especially with the vast number of products on the market. Restrictions like these will be difficult to implement in practice because there are no clear standards in defining goods.

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<sup>1</sup> "Foods Typically Purchased by Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Households," November 2016, USDA Food & Nutrition Service, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/research/snap/foods-typically-purchased-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap-households>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/pros-and-cons-of-restricting-snap-purchases/>



**Testimony before the Assembly Committee on Public Benefit Reform  
2025 Assembly Bill 180  
Kelly McDowell, Executive Secretary, Wisconsin Beverage Association  
May 15, 2025**

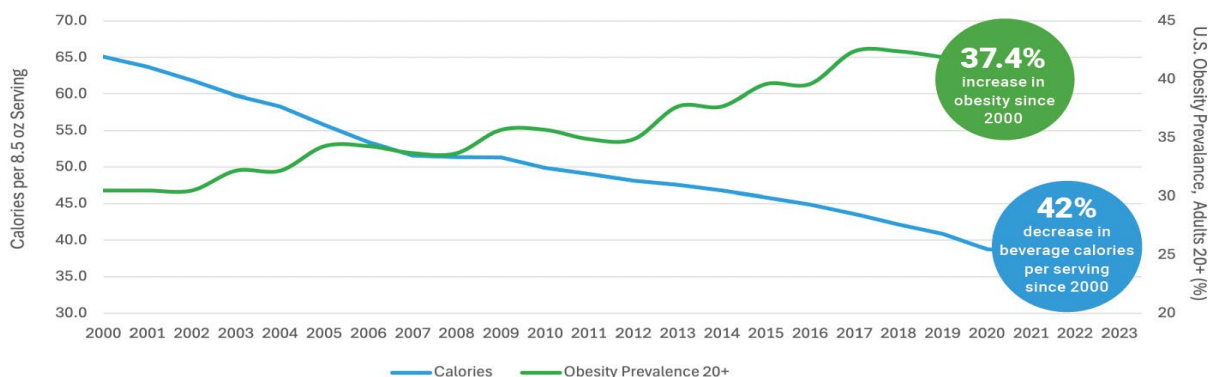
Good afternoon Chairperson Knodl and members of the Assembly Committee on Public Benefit Reform. On behalf of the members of the Wisconsin Beverage Association (WBA), I respectfully appear before you today in **opposition to Assembly Bill 180**. The legislation directs the Department of Health Services (DHS) to apply for a waiver from the USDA to bar the purchase of soda and candy through the SNAP, or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. As proposed, DHS would be required to resubmit the waiver annually until it is granted.

**Today, Nearly 60% of Beverages Americans Buy Have Zero Sugar.**

America's beverage companies— **WHO PROVIDE SOME 5,000 WISCONSIN MANUFACTURING AND DISTRIBUTION JOBS**— recognize the health challenges facing Americans and they're proud to be part of the solution, supporting families' efforts to achieve a balanced lifestyle. They believe their consumers deserve choices and clear information to choose what's right for them and their families. They are proud of the progress they've made in reducing beverage calories in the American diet. So, it's important to set the record straight.

**BEVERAGES ARE NOT DRIVING OBESITY IN THE UNITED STATES.**

While [CDC data shows adult obesity](#) is up 37.4% since 2000, full-calorie soda sales are down 22.9% and **beverage calories per serving are down 42%**. If the two were connected, obesity rates should have gone down with the decline in soda consumption.



In fact, calories from sugar-sweetened beverages are a small part of the American diet. **When consumption of all sugar-sweetened beverages are combined, they account for less than 6% of calories in the American diet**, according to USDA analysis<sup>1</sup> of government data.

The reality is the causes of obesity are complex, and no single food is to blame. The beverage industry has done more than any other industry to empower Americans with more choices with less sugar and clear information. Through the **Balance Calories Initiative**<sup>2</sup>, companies have introduced hundreds of low and zero-sugar beverages and prioritized them in their marketing to encourage consumers to try them.

<sup>1</sup> DA Supplement\_FoodCategorySources\_0.pdf

<sup>2</sup> BalanceUS - More Choices. Less Sugar.

## SNAP AND NON-SNAP HOUSEHOLDS MAKE THE SAME PURCHASING DECISIONS.

- According to the [USDA](#), **95% of SNAP purchases are for food items** – not beverages. They add, “There were no major differences in the expenditure patterns of SNAP and non-SNAP households.”
- **SNAP households spent 5 cents per dollar on soft drinks and non-SNAP households spent 4 cents per dollar**, according to the [latest USDA report](#) (2016). That’s a penny difference.
- While data is essential, it is important to note that the latest USDA data available is almost ten years ago and **does not reflect the 42% decrease in beverage calories per serving nor the 22.9% decrease in full-calorie soda sales since 2000**. Again, during that time adult obesity increased by 37.4%.
- In addition, the [USDA cautioned](#) that relying on rankings of SNAP purchases is misleading. USDA says a small difference in the expenditure share of a grocery item can lead to a major difference in the ranking of that commodity. For example, USDA pointed out that the difference in expenditures between lunch meat, ranked 10<sup>th</sup>, and non-refrigerated juice, ranked 69<sup>th</sup>, is one cent per dollar.
- With respect to outdated data, the claim that “children and families on SNAP consume 43% more of these beverages than those not on the program” is **based on a study that uses data that is nearly 25 years old. It is not an accurate picture of what people are consuming today**. More importantly, this point ignores the central finding of this study. On the very first page in the section: “What This Study Adds,” the authors state, **“SNAP participation was not associated with childhood obesity.”**

## RESEARCH SHOWS THE HEALTH BENEFITS ASSOCIATED WITH SNAP PARTICIPATION.

- Some proponents of restrictions purport that high rates of obesity and other chronic diseases among SNAP participants contribute to rising health care costs. Evidence<sup>3</sup> shows that, **“Actually, SNAP reduces medical spending.”**
- Compared to low-income non-SNAP participants, **adults in SNAP have average annual healthcare costs that are \$1,400 to \$5,000 lower on average**.
- **Adults who had access to SNAP during childhood** exhibit lower adult obesity risk and other lower risk of chronic health conditions such as cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes.
- **Children who participate in SNAP have better health status** than their eligible non-participating peers and are less likely to reside in households that forgo healthcare in lieu of other household necessities.

## ADDED BUREAUCRACY AND COSTS WILL NOT MAKE THE PROGRAM STRONGER FOR FAMILIES.

- Under the statutory definition of “soft drinks,”<sup>4</sup> the legislation would **impact more than 400 different beverages being sold today that have no sugar or calories, including sparkling waters, flavored waters, zero-sugar sports drinks, and iced teas**. At the same time, the proposal would not impact Starbucks cold drinks, flavored milk, sugar-sweetened creamers, and 100% juice, among others.
- Also, there are 650,000 foods and beverages on the market; 20,000 more are introduced every year, **and a typical Wisconsin grocery store stocks on average 31,704 items**.
- Allowing each state to create an “eligible foods” list would be an unending task to staff, maintain, and communicate to retailers, customers, and manufacturers on a real-time basis.
- Allowing government bureaucrats to determine what’s healthy and what’s not is not only a slippery slope, but it will dramatically increase costs. A USDA study estimated that a similar administrative effort would require an initial investment of \$400 million and \$600 million a year after that.
- The DHS fiscal estimate<sup>5</sup> demonstrates the significant state burden to implement the provisions of the legislation both for the state and for retailers, as well as to ensure retailer compliance:

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<sup>3</sup> Safeguarding SNAP as an Effective Antihunger Program: Myths and Potential Harms of Adding Diet Quality as a Core Objective | AJPH | Vol. 115 Issue 1

<sup>4</sup> **Section 77.51(17w), WI Stats.:** “Soft drink” means a beverage that contains less than 0.5 percent of alcohol and that contains natural or artificial sweeteners. “Soft drink” does not include a beverage that contains milk or milk products; soy, rice, or similar milk substitutes; or more than 50 percent vegetable or fruit juice by volume.

<sup>5</sup> [ab180\\_dhs.pdf](#)



- FIS, the state's electronic benefit (EBT) vendor, would need to build a database of Universal Product Codes (UPCs) into the functionality of FIS's EBT system to identify candy and soft drink products and maintain that database on an ongoing basis as new products enter the market. FIS would also need to make numerous other changes including changes at its call center and to software used in point of sale (POS) systems. The one-time cost of these changes is estimated at \$6,055,800 all funds (\$3,027,900 GPR). The ongoing cost to maintain the changes is estimated at \$60,000 all funds (\$30,000 GPR) annually.
- The estimate assumes DHS would not provide funding to food retailers to offset implementation costs they may incur. Retailers would likely experience additional costs such as upgrades to their POS systems. Retailers who do not have the hardware to scan the UPCs of each item might need to check items that may or may not meet the statutory definitions of candy and soft drink against the FIS database manually.
- As a condition of federal approval, FNS (USDA's Food Nutrition Service) may require DHS to ensure retailer compliance and enforcement. In that event, DHS's Office of the Inspector General (OIG) may require additional position authority and related funding. The exact number of additional positions necessary to enforce this bill is indeterminate at this time. The number of required positions would likely be developed during the approval process with FNS.
- While the fiscal note assumes a federal share of costs, the House Agriculture committee is proposing a number of SNAP policy changes, including reducing the federal government share of SNAP administrative costs from 50% to 25%.<sup>6</sup>

#### PROPOSED SNAP RESTRICTIONS FAIL TO ADDRESS ROOT CAUSES OF CHRONIC DISEASE DISPARITIES

- Evidence<sup>7</sup> does not support the claim that implementing restrictions on SNAP purchases will improve health. Instead, research shows that **imposing nutritional restrictions will interfere with the primary function of SNAP—reducing hunger by increasing purchasing power—without addressing the root causes of chronic disease disparities.** "SNAP effectively reduces food insecurity and prevents hunger, particularly among households with children and those facing extreme disadvantage."
- In 2024, **minors represented 33.9% of beneficiaries**, while **47.3% of recipients were elderly, blind, or disabled individuals. Veteran recipients totaled 18,716**, or 5.8% of the state's veteran population.
- **Importantly, restrictions on SNAP purchases do not address food insecurity, nor the reality that many low-income, working families live in food deserts**, where access to fresh, affordable produce and protein is limited due to the geographic area lacking full grocery stores. As such, corner convenience stores may be all that is available to residents who also lack transportation options.

#### EMPOWERING CONSUMERS WITH CHOICE & INFORMATION IS THE BETTER WAY.

- Expanding – not restricting – choice is the best way to support American families in achieving balance and improving health.
- Americans agree. On the question of whether those receiving FoodShare should be allowed to purchase soft drinks and other sugar-sweetened beverages with their benefit, a recent Public Opinion Strategies poll found that **almost two-thirds (64%) of Americans believe food stamps should be allowed to purchase these beverage products.** Nearly six out of ten **(58%) of those who voted for President Trump in the 2024 Election say soda and sugar sweetened beverages should be allowed to be purchased with food stamps**, including majorities of other subgroups who were part of the President's expanded coalition of voters.

Thank you for the opportunity to share WBA member concerns and opposition to Assembly Bill 180. They too want everyone to lead healthier lives, which is why they have transformed the beverage aisle to deliver more choices with less sugar and clear calorie information. We hope you will consider the issues that have been raised in opposing passage of this legislation.

<sup>6</sup> [Republicans Outdo Themselves in Food Stamp Cuts - The American Prospect](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Safeguarding SNAP as an Effective Antihunger Program: Myths and Potential Harms of Adding Diet Quality as a Core Objective | AJPH | Vol. 115 Issue 1](#)

# Delivering for Wisconsin

The Wisconsin beverage industry plays an important role in our economy by providing good-paying, family-supporting careers, contributing significant tax dollars, and making generous charitable donations to improve our communities. We have roots in every community across our state and work hard to deliver a positive impact for the customers, consumers and neighbors we serve.

## Our Facilities in Wisconsin



**5,016**

BEVERAGE  
INDUSTRY JOBS



**102**

MANUFACTURING PLANTS  
AND DISTRIBUTION  
FACILITIES



**84,258**

JOBS SUPPORTED  
BY BEVERAGE  
INDUSTRY



**\$5.1 Billion**

DIRECT ECONOMIC  
IMPACT



**\$478.0 Million**

WAGES AND BENEFITS



**\$359.8 Million**

CONTRIBUTED IN  
STATE TAXES



**\$669.3 Million**

CONTRIBUTED IN  
FEDERAL TAXES



**\$51.9 Million**

CHARITABLE  
DONATIONS