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February 11, 2009

Senator Mark Miller  
Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Finance  
Room 317 East  
State Capitol  
Madison, WI 53702

Representative Mark Pocan  
Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Finance  
Room 309 East  
State Capitol  
Madison, WI 53702

Dear Senator Miller and Representative Pocan:

I am writing in my capacity as Chair of the Joint Legislative Council's Special Committee on Performance-Based Disease Management Programs for Large Populations. Based upon the research and testimony undertaken during its tenure, the Special Committee members would like to recognize the important role of the Buy Local Buy Wisconsin Initiative (BLBW) in providing public access to fresh, local produce. This letter sets forth a committee recommendation regarding this issue.

Over its course of study, this committee heard testimony regarding the high public and private costs of chronic disease. State and national leaders in health policy emphasized the importance of increasing access to fresh fruits and vegetables to prevent chronic disease. The committee believes the Buy Local Buy Wisconsin program is particularly well-designed to advance efforts to promote healthy lifestyles in this state.

In 2008, the grant program was successful at enhancing the appeal of locally-sourced produce to consumers and expanding the regional markets for local farmers. During its first grants cycle in April 2008, the program received 94 applications requesting over \$3 million. This overwhelming interest points to a ready supply of local foods available for consumption.

The Special Committee requests that the Governor and the Joint Committee on Finance will continue to fund the BLBW program in recognition of the key role it plays in increasing public access to fresh, healthy foods and supporting the livelihoods of Wisconsin farms,

businesses, and nonprofits. We believe continued support for this already successful program will lead to long-term cost-savings in health care and improvements in public health for Wisconsin residents.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. If you have questions, please contact Rachel Letzing or Mary Matthias at the Legislative Council.

Sincerely,

Senator Julie Lassa  
Chair, Special Committee on  
Performance-Based Disease Management  
Programs for Large Populations

JL:ksm

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