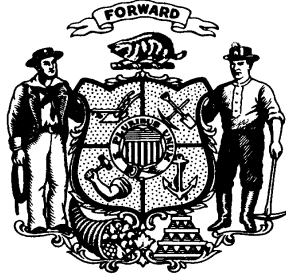


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February 11, 2009

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 AmeriCorps farm-to-school pilot program in fighting obesity and chronic disease by encouraging children to eat fresh, local foods. This letter sets forth a committee recommendation regarding this program.

In 2008, an AmeriCorps farm-to-school pilot program began to work with school lunch service staff and teachers in 10 Wisconsin schools to help with the procurement, education, and promotion of locally grown foods. AmeriCorps members have the unique role of working directly with school food service staff to identify local farmers and processors interested in selling produce to schools. They also work with school wellness programs to help teachers educate children about nutrition and healthy eating habits. Students benefit directly from the farm-to-school program. They learn the components of a healthy diet by eating fresher and more diverse food and by learning the origins of their food through classroom nutrition lessons and field trips to local farms. Educating children about healthy eating habits is an important way to address the increasing prevalence of obesity and chronic disease among children.

The Special Committee requests that the Governor and the Joint Committee on Finance will continue your support of funding from Serve Wisconsin for the efforts of DATCP, DPI, and DHS in piloting the ten farm-to-school projects throughout Wisconsin. Utilizing AmeriCorps members to help schools with the procurement, education, and promotion of locally grown foods is an effective and efficient way to improve the overall health of Wisconsin's children.

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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