

## **CO-SPONSORSHIP MEMORANDUM**

**To: All Legislators**

**From: Sen. Chris Kapenga**

**Rep. Clint Moses, Rep. Dan Knodl & Rep. Dean Kaufert**

**Date: Thursday, March 6, 2025**

**Re: Co-Sponsorship of LRB-1819 and LRB-2415, relating to: requiring the Department of Health Services to seek a waiver to prohibit the purchase of candy or soft drinks with FoodShare benefits.**

**DEADLINE: Friday, March 14, 2025**

Wisconsin is facing growing rates of obesity, diabetes, and other chronic conditions linked to poor dietary habits. More than one in three Wisconsinites struggle with obesity, and one in six live with diabetes or pre-diabetes. To make matters worse, federal programs that are supposed to help our population get healthier, are partially exacerbating these problems.

The federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides food benefits to low-income families to supplement their grocery budget so they can afford nutritious food. The program is operated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and administered in Wisconsin as FoodShare by the Department of Health Services (DHS). In 2023, Wisconsin residents received \$1.5 billion in FoodShare benefits and as of September 2024, 707,900 individuals were enrolled.

SNAP was designed to fight hunger and ensure lower-income families still have the funds necessary to access healthy food. Unfortunately, the program is failing to provide a nutritious diet for low-income households. In fact, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics, even though SNAP has proven successful at addressing food insecurity and is the largest food program operated by the federal government, it is the only government feeding program that does not have nutrition standards to address diet quality. For example, within the SNAP program purchases of some of the unhealthiest food on the market, sweetened beverages, desserts, and candy exceed the program's combined sales of fruits and vegetables by \$400 million a year!

Wisconsin needs to act to curb the rates of obesity and other chronic diseases, especially among our most vulnerable. That is why this bill directs the Secretary of DHS to apply for a federal waiver to modify our SNAP program to prohibit the purchase of candy and soft drinks. According to a USDA study, soda is the #1 item purchased with SNAP benefits and nearly \$610 million is spent on sugar-sweetened beverages by SNAP recipients per year.

Studies have also shown that children and families on SNAP consume 43% more sugar-sweetened beverages than children and families not on SNAP.

We can prioritize health, reduce health care costs, support local agriculture, and ensure that SNAP fulfills its mission of providing low-income families access to healthier options by not allowing the purchasing of candy or soft drinks with FoodShare benefits.

Attached to this email is a letter we are sending to DHS Secretary Designee Kirsten Johnson, asking for her support for this legislation. We will also be sending copies of the letter to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. and U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins.

If you would like to co-sponsor this legislation, please contact Sen. Kapenga's office at (6-9174) or Rep. Moses' office at (9192). All co-sponsors will be added to both versions of the bill unless otherwise specified.

#### ***Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau***

*This bill requires the Department of Health Services to request any necessary waiver from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to prohibit the purchase of candy or soft drinks with FoodShare benefits. Under current law, the federal food stamp program, known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and called FoodShare in this state, provides benefits to eligible low-income households for the purchase of food. FoodShare is administered by DHS. The federal government pays the benefits for FoodShare while the state and federal government share the cost of administration. Current federal law defines the foods eligible for purchase under FoodShare. The bill requires DHS to seek any necessary waiver to prohibit the use of FoodShare benefits for the purchase of candy or soft drinks. If the waiver is granted, DHS must prohibit the use of FoodShare benefits to purchase candy or soft drinks. If any necessary waiver is not granted, the bill requires DHS to resubmit the waiver request annually until it is granted.*

*For further information see the state fiscal estimate, which will be printed as an appendix to this bill.*