



JERRY PETROWSKI

WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR

Senate Bill 487- *Harvest for Hope Grants*

January 30, 2018

Good afternoon, members of the committee, and thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on Senate Bill 487, the Harvest for Hope legislation.

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 487, 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 benefiting 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.

After lengthy discussions among a number of organizations, Senate Amendment 1 was drafted to adjust some definitions and provide further assurance the bill will accomplish its goal. The amendment requires DATCP to award the grant using a RFP process, expands on the existing prohibition on charging a fee to food banks to receive food procured with the grant, and expands the types of organizations that may apply for the grant.

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.

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Testimony of David Lee
IN SUPPORT OF SB 487 HARVEST FOR HOPE
Before the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Small Business & Tourism
January 30, 2018

Dear Chairman Moulton and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer comments in support of SB 487 and how it is a common sense public policy response to addressing surplus agriculture and hunger in our state.

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

First, a little bit about our organization. Feeding Wisconsin is a member-organized and supported state association representing six regional member food banks in the state of Wisconsin. Our mission is help our food banks, partners, and stakeholders fight hunger, improve health and strengthen communities.

Together, through our food banks' network of 1,000 local food pantries and meal programs in every single county in the state, we provided over 50 million meals to our friends and neighbors in 2016.

Recognizing that hunger is a health issue, increasing our ability to source and distribute fresh produce has become a strategic priority for our food banks.

According to our 2014 Hunger Study, the people utilizing food pantries throughout the state live with diet related diseases at a higher rate than others. In fact, 82% of food pantry clients report purchasing "cheap, unhealthy food" to stretch their food budgets.

Our food banks have been devoting resources to increase the supply of fresh and nutritious products through our partnerships with the food industry and agriculture sector. Over the last three years, our networks' distribution of fresh products increased over 200%, from just under 5 million pounds in 2013 to over 16 million pounds in 2016.

Still, there are vast amounts of surplus, fresh Wisconsin grown food products that are left in the field that simply costs donors and food banks too much to harvest, capture, and distribute. With a little bit of funding to cover the marginal costs of bins, transportation, cans, and labels, food banks can serve as small a safety net for Wisconsin farmers for the products that are grown for consumption.

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

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.

In Wisconsin, these funds could be implemented to offset the costs to source, process and distribute healthy, Wisconsin grown produce through food industry partnerships.

This is extremely exciting because food banks and food pantries alike could provide a bounty of fresh, nutritious off-season, Wisconsin grown products. Or these funds could be used offset the cost that farmers incur when they donate their fresh products to local food pantries.

The legislation requires that DATCP put this program out to bid to select a qualified partner that can achieve the goals of the legislation.

In the version of the bill that passed out of the Assembly Committee on Consumer Protection, there were two amendments that were adopted that would make this legislation more inclusive of the entire emergency food network in our state. We welcome these amendments and are incredibly excited to see how other groups might implement this program that would increase the supply of fresh and healthy food for Wisconsin families that utilize food pantries.

Thank you for your time today. As part of our materials, we are also delivering a letter from a broad coalition of industry groups, healthcare systems, and food pantries that support this proposal. I hope the committee can join us and the many people around the state that support SB 487.

Harvest for Hope is a win-win for our state's agricultural community and 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.



Healthy Kids Collaborative



January 29, 2018

To: The Hon. Members of the Wisconsin State Senate Committee on Agriculture, Small Business and Tourism

Re: Harvest for Hope: Senate Bill 487 (Petrowski) and Assembly Bill 577 (Krug)

Earlier this year, Senator Petrowski and Representative Krug introduced SB 487 and AB 577, known as The Harvest for Hope Grant Program. We are writing today to express our support for this proposal and to ask for your support of this important initiative.

Food insecurity is a serious problem in Wisconsin, where about 700,000 of our state's residents, including about 250,000 children, don't know where their next meal is coming from. Food insecurity is connected to numerous adverse health conditions and outcomes, especially in children.

At the same time, Wisconsin is a top-10 agriculture state, producing a bounty of incredible food products for our state, the nation and the world. Many of our state's farmers and food processors already donate produce to food banks and local food programs and despite their generosity, there are still millions of pounds of edible and nutritious produce that remain unharvested in farm fields due to fluctuating market forces and unpredictable surpluses.

We believe that the Harvest for Hope program will help to address these issues by providing the funds to increase the availability of fresh and fresh processed food for our state's residents at risk of hunger.

A healthful diet helps to reduce chronic diseases such as heart disease and diabetes. However, Wisconsin residents at risk of hunger may not have the access or the food budget needed to make healthful diet choices.

According to Feeding Wisconsin's 2014 State Hunger Report, which surveyed clients at food pantries across the state, the most requested product that clients were not getting was fresh fruit and vegetables.

At the same time, 82% of people report purchasing "cheap, unhealthy food" to stretch their budgets, 34% of the people utilizing Wisconsin food pantries report living with a person has diabetes and 53% report living with a person with heart disease.

We believe that the Harvest for Hope Grant Program will help make the healthy choice the easy choice for all Wisconsin families and your support of this program would help make this happen.

Harvest for Hope is a public-private partnership. Private funds would be raised by a partnering organization that can source fresh and fresh-processed, Wisconsin grown agricultural products and distribute them in an accountable, traceable, food safe manner at scale.

These funds will be matched by the State of Wisconsin on a dollar per dollar basis up to \$250,000 per year for the next four years. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) will serve as the fiscal agent, select a partner through an RFP process and monitor the use of the funds to ensure accountability.

We are incredibly excited that the state legislature will be considering this proposal to increase the supply of fresh and fresh-processed Wisconsin grown food available in local communities for state residents at risk of hunger.

If you have any questions about this proposal, please do not hesitate to contact David Lee, Executive Director, Feeding Wisconsin at 608-960-4511 or via email at dalee@feedingwi.org.

Dear Chair Moulton and Members of the Senate Agriculture Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of SB 487: The Harvest for Hope Grant Proposal.

My name is Donna Ambrose and I am the Director of Programs and Partnerships at Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin. We were founded in 1986 and today serve 16 counties in Southwest Wisconsin. Last year over 1 million requests for help were answered by Second Harvest and their network of food pantries, homeless shelters and meal sites.

The mission of Second Harvest Foodbank is to end hunger through community partnerships. Our first and foremost partnerships are with our affiliated food pantries and meal programs. They serve as the boots on the ground outlets through which we are able to distribute food.

Second Harvest plays many roles to our many community partners but the core function we play as a food bank is to source, sort, safely store, and efficiently distribute food to our partner food pantries. Over the course of the last year, through our network of more than 225 agencies and programs, we were able to distribute more than 14 million pounds of food.

Recognizing the need to be able to provide more healthy and nutritious options to our food pantries and clients, we have begun increasing our supply of fresh products, including fresh fruits and vegetables, and fresh processed Wisconsin grown products over the last few years. In the first 6 months of this fiscal year we provided nearly 3 ½ million pounds of nutritious fruits & vegetables to our partners.

Still, we have more work to do. Last year, we received requests for over half a million pounds of fresh products that we could not fulfill. The Harvest for Hope program would help organizations like ours leverage their private fundraising to help provide more fresh and fresh processed Wisconsin grown food for the individuals and families utilizing food pantries.

Prior to joining Second Harvest, I was the Executive Director of Caritas in Beloit, a food pantry that has served over 8,000 residents of Beloit, and surrounding communities in Rock County, in the past year. I saw the need for the fresh products that would be accessed through this program firsthand.

Every Saturday, Caritas offers fresh fruits and vegetables to the people they serve. The event is called "Surplus Saturday" and is available to anyone in need regardless of how many times they had previously visited our pantry. It began last summer and has become a big hit!

The first week-end we hosted this event, I met a mom and her young son. She was going through a difficult divorce, and due to financial constraints, had moved in with her sister's family. She shared with me how difficult it was to purchase healthy food for her son because it was, simply put, too expensive.

I cannot express to you how thrilled she was when she saw a table loaded with a wide assortment of fresh fruits and vegetables. What broke my heart was when her pre-school aged son shared with me how he had to put the cuties back when they were at the store because "Mom said we couldn't afford them..."

This is a kid that wants the healthy stuff, whose Mother had encouraged good eating habits, and yet, could not afford to purchase the food he needs as a young, active, growing boy.

Another woman I came to know has a different story. She is elderly, on a limited income and residing in a subsidized apartment complex in Beloit. What I can share about her is her resourcefulness, talent for cooking, and her very generous heart.

Every Saturday, she would visit us for produce and promptly take her food home and prepare a big pot of vegetable soup that she would share with the other residents of her building. She is grateful for the assistance and the ability to get fresh produce from Caritas as opposed to using her limited income to purchase less healthy food.

We are proud to support SB 487 because it will help to increase the ability for food banks and food pantries to source and distribute more Wisconsin grown fresh and fresh processed food. By providing a public dollar match for every private dollar raised, the state will effectively be able to double the impact of private dollar investment in increasing the amount of healthful, nutritious food for food pantries.

Harvest for Hope increases our partnership with the generous citizens of Wisconsin to continue taking steps forward toward a hunger free Wisconsin.

The goal of Harvest for Hope is a goal that every organization dedicated to fighting hunger can support.

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



January 30, 2018

To: Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture

From: Brad Paul
Executive Director

Jonathan Bader,
Programs & Policy Director, WISCAP

RE: Harvest for Hope (AB 577 & SB 487)

Thank you members of the Committee for inviting public comment on the Harvest for Hope legislation. We appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback.

WISCAP is the statewide Association of Wisconsin's 16 anti-poverty Community Action Agencies and 2 special purpose agencies. Thirteen (13) of our members and 3 other partners coordinate the statewide distribution of federal TEFAP commodities to 334 food pantries, meal sites and shelters in every county. Food pantries in our network serve 200,000 people each month, while meal sites & shelters provide 45,000 meals in their communities each month. Community Action Agencies have been involved in emergency food in Wisconsin for many decades. In fact a few weeks ago WISCAP marked a significant milestone - the distribution of 200 million pounds of commodities since 1998.

WISCAP supports the bill - as amended by the Assembly - because it will increase the supply of produce - both fresh and canned - recovered from farmers & food processors for distribution by all of Wisconsin's emergency food providers. This bill simply makes sense. Not only do low-income families receive healthy fruits & vegetables, but Wisconsin farmers & food processors receive payments for donating quality surplus foods. Other Midwestern states - notably Minnesota & Ohio - have long recovered their state's surplus agriculture products for donation to food pantries. In addition, the federal government itself regularly buys surplus food from U.S. farmers & processors for donation to schools & emergency food providers across the nation to aid farmers and to supplement the inventory of privately donated & purchased foods at food pantries. Wisconsin should not be left behind.

WISCAP also supports the bill because food insecurity in Wisconsin is real. Despite the robust economy many low-wage workers, children, seniors & disabled continue to struggle with insufficient income to buy the food they need. The number of household visits to TEFAP food pantries in 2017 is still 58% higher than before the recession. This tells us that tens of thousands of Wisconsinites remain under considerable nutritional & economic stress - including many thousands of young children.

WISCAP had concerns with the original bill as drafted that we shared with Feeding Wisconsin, who has been very responsive, and with the support of the bill's sponsors the Assembly Committee adopted the proposed amendments to strengthen the initiative, and expand participation & cooperation among diverse providers.

Specifically, the amendments:

- Clarify that HFH food will be provided to food pantries & other outlets at no charge.
- Clarify that HFH food will go to food pantries & other outlets located only in Wisconsin.
- Expands the types of food banks that distribute HFH foods to include organizations that coordinate regional distribution of federal commodities – called “Emergency Feeding Organizations” (EFOs).
- Further defines eligible food banks & EFOs as those that collect distribution data and monitor their networks for compliance with operational & food safety standards.
- Expands food pantries and other outlets eligible to receive HFH foods to members in good standing with any food bank or EFO – even independent food banks.
- Expands eligible grantees to include a statewide organization that supports the commodities network – in addition to a statewide Association of food banks.

WISCAP urges the Committee members to adopt the amendments and vote in favor of AB 577 to ensure the broadest participation in the distribution of HFH foods by Wisconsin’s networks of food banks, EFOs, food pantries and other eligible outlets. The amendments strengthen the initiative by promoting greater involvement & cooperation among organizations so HFH food are assured of reaching households in every community.

Thank you for your time & your consideration of our comments.

The Wisconsin Community Action Program Association (WISCAP) is the statewide association of Wisconsin’s sixteen (16) anti-poverty Community Action Agencies and 2 statewide special purpose agencies. Our network addresses the problems of poverty across multiple sectors by helping low-income people attain greater economic self-sufficiency and by relieving situations of distress. Locally-controlled and operated Community Action Agencies strengthen Wisconsin families and communities by providing programs and services, including housing, energy, transportation, education, health, business development, family support, and food security.

Thirteen (13) Community Action Agencies and three partner agencies coordinate the distribution of 12 million pounds of federal commodities to 334 food pantries, meal sites and shelters statewide. Food pantries in the network collectively distribute over 50 million pounds of public and privately donated & purchased food annually.



Healthy Kids
Collaborative

TO: Senate Committee on Agriculture, Small Business and Tourism
FROM: Shelly Shaw, MPH, Program Coordinator, Healthy Kids Collaborative of Dane County, Child Health Advocacy Center, UW Health/American Family Children's Hospital
DATE: Tuesday, January 30, 2018
RE: Support for Senate Bill 487, the Harvest for Hope Grant

Good afternoon, my name is Shelly Shaw, and I am a representative for the Healthy Kids Collaborative of Dane County at UW Health/American Family Children's Hospital, I am pleased to speak before your committee in support of Senate Bill 487, the Harvest for Hope Grant.

We work with partners across the county and state to create communities where all children have every opportunity to eat healthy foods and be active. As expressed by former Robert Wood Johnson President and CEO, Risa Lavizzo Mourey, "The choices people make depend on the choices they have." Every day we see roadblock after roadblock impeding opportunities children and families have to eat healthy foods. We believe the Harvest for Hope program moves us forward by changing the choices facing children and families.

We live in a community where there are 5 times as many fast food restaurants as there are grocery stores (1). For families on a budget, it is difficult to afford fruits and vegetables as prices for these products continue to rise while unhealthy options like pop continue to decline in cost (2). Given the multitude of environmental barriers to eating well, it is not surprising that only 9% of kids in Dane County are eating the recommended 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables every day (3).

Look around your community and consider your friends and neighbors who might be food insecure. Food insecurity is the clinical term for what is more commonly known as hunger and it is measured by how often people run out of money to buy enough food. In Wisconsin, there are about 700,000 people who are food insecure. About 19% of our food insecure neighbors are college graduates and 20% are children (4). In Dane County alone, 2,942 7th – 12th graders reported skipping a meal or eating less food at least once in the past month because their family did not have enough money for food. (3)

Partners in our schools will tell you that hungry children have lower math scores and are more likely to be suspended from school (4). At the clinic, our partners are seeing 23% of Dane County 7th-12th graders who are either overweight or obese (3). If our goal is to set children up to be successful adults, we have a long way to go. Being overweight or obese affects quality of life and puts individuals at risk for developing many diseases, especially heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and cancer (5).

The impacts hunger and poor nutrition have on our communities are profound. Statistics like this are heartbreaking by themselves, but it adds insult to injury in a proud agriculture state when edible and

healthy foods get passed over in our farms every year while kids wonder where their next meal may come from.

With that, we respectfully seek your support for Senate Bill 487. Programs such as Harvest for Hope are a win-win for Wisconsin. Our farmers will be able to donate more food and our kids living in families that are at-risk of hunger will have greater opportunities to make the choices that will help them reach their fullest potential.

Thank you,

Shelly Shaw, MPH
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608-265-6846

References

(1) Dane County Data: 85.85 fast food restaurants per 100,000 residents; 16.39 grocery stores per 100,000 residents.

(2) Wallinga, D., Schoonover, H., & Muller, M. 2009. Considering the contribution of US agricultural policy to the obesity epidemic: overview and opportunities. *Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition*, 4(1), 3-19. doi:10.1080/19320240802706817

(3) 2012 Dane County Youth Assessment: 9.2% of youth in our community are eating 5 or more servings of fruits and veggies a day.

(4) Heckman, N. Division of Policy, Planning and Evaluation. Public Health Madison Dane County. *Hunger and Food Security in Wisconsin and Dane County*. June 2016.

(5) Wisconsin Department of Health Services (2012-2014). Retrieved from:
<http://healthydane.org/?hcn=CommunityDashboard>