



**HUNGER  
TASK  
FORCE**  
of Milwaukee  
SINCE 1974

May 8, 2001

State Senator Judy Robson  
Chair, Senate Committee on Human Services and Aging  
State Capitol  
P.O. Box 7882  
Madison, WI 53707-7882

Dear Senator Robson:

I am writing to support Senate Bill 91, legislation that would allow some food stamp recipients to potentially receive more benefits to feed themselves and their families.

This bill would affect the Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependent Children, or ABAWDS, who participate in the Food Stamp Program. This group's food stamp benefits were severely restricted by the federal welfare reform legislation passed in 1996. That law limits the receipt of food stamps for most people between the ages of 18 and 50 who are not disabled or raising minor children to three months while unemployed out of each three-year period. This legislation, for the first time in U.S. history, cut off individuals from the Food Stamp Program not because they refused to work but because no work opportunities were available to them within the time period the provision specifies.

As a group, the ABAWDS are extremely poor. They have an average income of 20% of the Federal Poverty Line. They face significant difficulties in finding jobs, partly due to the fact that more than 80 percent of them have no more than a high school education. Almost half of the ABAWD population are women, and almost three out of four ABAWDS live alone.

Senate Bill 91 asks the Department of Workforce Development to take advantage of a federal option that minimally fills the food gap for an extremely poor group of people. In 2000, 39 other states applied for and received such a waiver from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. According to the Washington-based Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Wisconsin has over 24,000 months of food stamps that could be authorized with its individual exemptions during Federal Fiscal Year 2001. This not only translates into thousands of poor Wisconsin individuals getting critically-needed benefits, but it also means that our state would recoup hundreds of thousands of federal dollars. These dollars are spent in communities large and small all over Wisconsin and not only help individuals, but farmers and grocers as well.

201 S. Hawley Court

Milwaukee, WI 53214-1966 There are many administrative options available to the Department of Workforce Development if they submit this waiver. We remain open to working with the

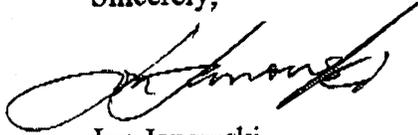
tel: 414 777-0483

fax: 414 777-0480

Department to help them explore these options to determine which ones would most benefit the ABAWD population.

Thank you for holding a hearing on this important issue. If you have any questions, please contact me at 414-777-0483.

Sincerely,



Jon Janowski  
Director of Advocacy

Cc: State Senator Gwendolynne Moore  
State Senator Robert Wirch  
State Senator Carol Roessler  
State Senator Peggy Rosenzweig  
State Senator Dave Hansen  
State Senator Robert Welch



## Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin

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loppw@ecunet.org ♦ slarson@itis.com

Rev. Sue Moline Larson, Director

### SENATE HUMAN SERVICES AND AGING COMMITTEE HEARING

SENATOR JUDY ROBSON, CHAIRPERSON

### S.B. 91, WAIVERS FOR THE FEDERAL FOOD STAMP PROGRAM

State Capitol, Room 300 Southeast

May 10, 2001, 10:00 a.m.

Dear Senator Robson and committee members,

Thank you for accepting testimony on S.B. 91, legislation to address the need for federal work requirement waivers for the food stamp program. I am Rev. Sue Moline Larson, the director of the Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin, the legislative advocacy office of the six synods with congregations in the state of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. I testify in favor of S.B. 91.

When Congress passed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunities Reconciliation Act or welfare reform act of 1996, it targeted one key population group, low-income unemployed single adults without children, to further withdraw the benefits of social safety net programs. PRWORA cut food stamp benefits for these "undeserving poor" to three months in any three-year period except when working or living in a high unemployment (low-labor-demand) area.

The National Survey of America's Families profiles this group of single adults as twice as likely to have dropped out of high school, and to earn less than twice the federal minimum wage (less than \$10.30/hour). More than a third live in poverty, and they sometimes have problems paying for food, yet very few receive any type of government assistance.

Prior to the passage of the federal welfare reform bill, Wisconsin also targeted this group by ending its mandate to counties to provide general income assistance to unemployed adults. The combination of the cut in food stamp benefits and in general assistance has resulted in more than half of able-bodied single adults failing to have health insurance, and having difficulty paying for housing.

The NSAF study found that the single adult population is more likely to seek access to education or job training opportunities, yet despite such endeavors, their incomes remain low. It is important that the Legislature approve S.B. 91, to allow the state to seek waivers to the federal food stamp work requirement rules. In addition, the state should urge Congress to support funding for additional job training opportunities. With increased access to food security and opportunities for higher-income employment, the population of able-bodied single adults without children will be much more likely to address the hardships inherent in their lives and the uncertain futures that they otherwise will face.

Thank you.



**Testimony on SB 91**

**Senate Committee on Human Services and Aging  
Senator Judy Robson, Chair**

**May 10, 2001**

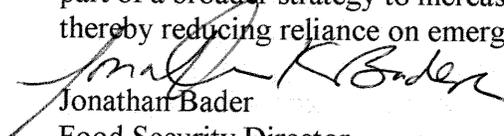
The Wisconsin Community Action Program Association (WISCAP) supports SB 91 to require the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) to request a federal waiver from minimum work requirements for certain food stamp recipients living in areas of high unemployment. This would appropriately expand access to food stamps for certain households living in these areas.

Currently, with some exceptions, all able-bodied food stamp recipients between 18 and 60 years who have no dependents (ABAWDs) are limited to only 3 months of food stamp benefits during a 36-month period if they work less than half time. The federal government allows states to request waivers to exempt such persons from the 3-month limit if they live in areas that have (1) unemployment higher than 10% or (2) an insufficient number of jobs to provide employment for these individuals. Wisconsin has not sought this waiver, although 41 other states and the District of Columbia have done so.

Since implementation of welfare reform Wisconsin's food stamp enrollment has dropped sharply, which has contributed to an increase in demand at food pantries. December 2000 food stamp enrollment was 38% lower than January 1995 even though the number of people living in poverty had increased. As a result low-income citizens in Wisconsin received \$76 million less in food stamps in 2000 than in 1995.

If SB 91 is passed the waiver would affect at least 6 counties - Ashland, Clark, Juneau, Marquette, Price and Rusk - because their unemployment rates are over 10%. DWD could also designate additional areas having an insufficient number of jobs. The bill's fiscal note indicates that in March 2001 there were 2,395 ABAWDs statewide who were required to meet work requirements but does not report how many live in these 6 counties. Nevertheless, implementing the waiver would remove one of the barriers to food stamp participation in areas with high unemployment, while simultaneously reducing pressure on food pantries in those counties. It also would likely encourage increased food stamp applications by certain households.

WISCAP urges the legislature to pass SB 91 to appropriately expand utilization of food stamps as part of a broader strategy to increase low-income access to food through normal retail channels and thereby reducing reliance on emergency food providers.

  
Jonathan Bader  
Food Security Director



**HUNGER  
TASK  
FORCE**  
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SINCE 1974

May 18, 2001

State Senator Judy Robson  
State Capitol  
P.O. Box 7882  
Madison, WI 53707-7882

Dear Senator Robson:

At your request, I am writing to provide follow-up information for you and the members of the Senate Human Services and Aging Committee regarding Senate Bill 91. This legislation would significantly help some Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependent Children (ABAWD) participating in the Food Stamp Program.

On May 10<sup>th</sup>, I presented testimony to the Human Services Committee which indicated that Wisconsin has 13 counties and one city that has been defined as a "labor surplus area" by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). The Department of Labor defines a labor surplus area as an area where unemployment is greater than ten percent; an area where the county's unemployment rate over a 24-month period exceeds the national average by at least one-fifth; or an area where adverse labor conditions exist on Indian reservations. The 13 counties and one city that have been identified by the DOL include the following: Ashland, Bayfield, Clark, Florence, Forest, Iron, Juneau, Langlade, Marquette, Menomonie, Rusk, Sawyer, Washburn, and the City of Racine. According to information I received this week, it also appears that Oneida County and the City of Janesville might also qualify as a "labor surplus area."

In 2000, 39 states obtained waivers from the three-month food stamp cut-off. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has granted the majority of its waivers for cities and counties whose unemployment rate over a 24-month period exceeds the national average for that period by at least one-fifth. As I indicated in my testimony, Senate Bill 91 would help a group of people that is extremely poor. USDA data from a 1998 report show that 82 percent of the people whom the cut-off affects are part of a food stamp unit that has income below half of the poverty line. Over forty percent of the ABAWD group are women. About one-third of this group are over 40 years of age, and almost 90 percent of the group has no more than a high school education.

201 S. Hawley Court

Milwaukee, WI 53214-1968

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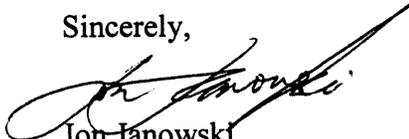
fax: 414 777-0480

Research shows that many individuals subject to the cut-off can receive all of the food stamps they need if given just a few additional months of eligibility beyond the three months provided under federal law. We thank you again for your efforts to pass

this legislation that would provide this modest amount of relief to a severely impoverished population.

If you have any additional questions or would like more information on this topic, please contact me at 414-777-0483 or [jon@hungertaskforce.org](mailto:jon@hungertaskforce.org).

Sincerely,



Jon Janowski  
Director of Advocacy

Cc: State Senator Gwendolynne Moore  
State Senator Robert Wirsch  
State Senator Carol Roessler  
State Senator Peggy Rosenzweig  
State Senator Dave Hansen  
State Senator Robert Welch

# Vote Record

## Senate - Committee on Human Services and Aging

Date: 9/5/01  
 Moved by: Robson      Seconded by: Hansen  
 AB: \_\_\_\_\_      SB: 91      Clearinghouse Rule: \_\_\_\_\_  
 AJR: \_\_\_\_\_      SJR: \_\_\_\_\_      Appointment: \_\_\_\_\_  
 AR: \_\_\_\_\_      SR: \_\_\_\_\_      Other: \_\_\_\_\_

A/S Amdt: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Be recommended for:

- Passage
- Introduction
- Adoption
- Rejection

- Indefinite Postponement
- Tabling
- Concurrence
- Nonconcurrence
- Confirmation

Committee Member

Sen. Judith Robson, Chair  
 Sen. Gwendolynne Moore  
 Sen. Robert Wirch  
 Sen. David Hansen  
 Sen. Carol Roessler  
 Sen. Robert Welch  
 Sen. Ted Kanavas

<u>Aye</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Absent</u>	<u>Not Voting</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Totals: \_\_\_\_\_



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Rev. Sue Moline Larson, Director

SENATE HUMAN SERVICES AND AGING COMMITTEE HEARING  
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Thank you.