

To: Chairs & Members of the Special Committee on Performance-Based Disease Management Programs for Large Populations

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Regarding: Farm-to-School Policy Options for Improving School Nutrition

Background:

- A coalition of stakeholders, from across the state, have come together around the topic of establishing a Farm-to-School program for the State of Wisconsin. This ad hoc coalition recognizes the benefits that a farm-to-school initiative would have on school nutrition, healthy eating habits, local farmers/producers, and to local economic development. With this in mind, the coalition has interest in pursuing three farm-to-school objectives:

- 1.) **Establish a statewide Farm-to-School Economic Development Consultant** position within DATCP to facilitate collaboration of DPI's Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, School Nutrition Team and Team Nutrition Program, DHS's Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Program, and DATCP's Americorps and Buy Local Buy Wisconsin Programs; provide matching services between local farmers and interested school districts; address issues concerning Farm to School Programs such as training, liability and food safety issues; and administer the Farm to School Grants Program. Budget: \$120,000.
- 2.) **Increase the school lunch reimbursement rate by 10 cents.** Increase state match of the National School Lunch Program by \$0.05/meal to allow school lunch programs to become cost neutral, and increase the state match by an additional \$0.05/meal for purchases of local fresh fruits and vegetables. As costs associated with meal production have increased higher than funding, monies from districts' general funds have been used to defray some of these escalating costs. In 2006-07 approximately \$5 million was transferred from district general funds (Fund 10) to school nutrition (Fund 50) programs. Additional monies for local fresh fruit and vegetables will enable schools to provide fresher, healthier foods while spurring economic development within the state. Budget: \$10,000,000.

In calling for an increase in the school lunch reimbursement rate, this coalition is joining in with many other voices. Superintendent Burmaster, the School Nutrition Association, The Hunger Task Force, and the Wisconsin Dietetic Association are all calling for an increase to the school lunch reimbursement rate.

- 3.) **Create a Competitive Grants Program** for school districts to address training needs, infrastructure needs including equipment and renovation; provide local agriculture education; and provide seed money for purchasing local foods. Budget: \$800,000.

Request:

- Please consider the Farm-to-School initiative as an avenue to improve school nutrition in Wisconsin schools.

Rationale:

- By improving access to healthy foods, specifically fresh fruits and vegetables, there will be an increased likelihood of improving consumption. This policy initiative will help counter the obesity epidemic in Wisconsin. In addition, farm-to-school initiatives will help facilitate improved local economic development.