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March 2, 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 Buy Local Buy Wisconsin Initiative (BLBW) in providing public access to fresh, local produce. This letter sets forth a committee recommendation regarding this issue.

Over its course of study, this committee heard testimony regarding the high public and private costs of chronic disease. State and national leaders in health policy emphasized the importance of increasing access to fresh fruits and vegetables to prevent chronic disease. The committee believes the Buy Local Buy Wisconsin program is particularly well-designed to advance efforts to promote healthy lifestyles in this state.

In 2008, the grant program was successful at enhancing the appeal of locally-sourced produce to consumers and expanding the regional markets for local farmers. During its first grants cycle in April 2008, the program received 94 applications requesting over \$3 million. This overwhelming interest points to a ready supply of local foods available for consumption.

The Special Committee requests that the Governor and the Joint Committee on Finance will continue to fund the BLBW program in recognition of its key role in increasing public access to fresh, healthy foods and supporting the livelihoods of Wisconsin farms, businesses, and

nonprofits. The Committee also requests additional funding for BLBW for the creation of a Farm-to-School Economic Development Consultant. The Consultant would fill a special need within BLBW to work directly with school districts to provide local food to public schools. We believe expanded support for this already successful program will place Wisconsin at the forefront of the local food movement, while leading to long-term cost-savings in health care and improvements in public health for Wisconsin residents.

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

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