



## About Feeding Wisconsin

Feeding Wisconsin is the state association of the six regional Feeding America affiliated food banks that provide food to almost 1,000 local food programs in all 72 counties of the state. Together, Feeding Wisconsin's network provided 86 million pounds of food to Wisconsinites in every corner of our state in 2021, an increase of 75% over 2019.

Through our food banks and food pantries, we work to ensure that everybody has access to the food and benefits they need to work, learn, play and live healthy lives.



## The Impact of COVID on Food Insecurity

COVID-19 was the perfect storm—increased demand for food resources, declines in donations of food, and supply chain disruptions and adaptations to our distribution model. Feeding America estimates that in 2021, 605,650 Wisconsinites or 10.4% will experience food insecurity. This includes 204,600 (or 16.2%) Wisconsin children.<sup>1</sup> About 40% of those coming through our pantries and mobile distribution lines have never relied on the emergency food network before.<sup>2</sup>

## 2021 - 2022 State Legislative Session

Feeding Wisconsin's public policy priorities are guided by our mission and consistent with the values that are broadly shared by all Wisconsinites:

- That Wisconsinites have the access to the food and benefits they need during hard times so they can work and focus on stabilizing their lives.
- That our Wisconsin children have the nutritious food they need to be healthy and to be prepared to learn in school.
- That our food banks and food pantries have the resources and food they need to provide high quality, nutritious emergency food assistance to those who need it.



## Support AB662/SB648: food security and Wisconsin products grant program

In 2020 and now again in 2022, Feeding Wisconsin and network food banks were awarded a DATCP Food Security Initiative Grant funded through federal recovery funds. The 2020 CARES Act funded grant provided \$10M to support the purchase of 6.2M pounds of primarily Wisconsin product including beef, pork, cheese, butter, canned, frozen and fresh produce to distribute through the Feeding Wisconsin network food pantries across the state.

During COVID, food insecurity has been mitigated by programs such as the Farmers to Families Food Boxes, USDA Agriculture investments in TEFAP, FoodShare and Pandemic-EBT, and state and local allocations of CARES Act and ARPA funds to support the ending hunger efforts of food banks and local pantries. When the

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.feedingamerica.org/about-us/press-room/local-food-insecurity-projections>

<sup>2</sup> [https://feedingwi.org/content/Food%20Pantries%20During%20the%20COVID19%20Pandemic\\_A%20Survey%20of%20Visitors%20to%20Feeding%20Wisconsin%20Network%20Pantries\\_July%202021.pdf](https://feedingwi.org/content/Food%20Pantries%20During%20the%20COVID19%20Pandemic_A%20Survey%20of%20Visitors%20to%20Feeding%20Wisconsin%20Network%20Pantries_July%202021.pdf)

federal public health emergency ends, many of these programs will also end, leaving many individuals and families without the resources that have kept them afloat during this challenging time, and creating a “food/commodity cliff” for our food banks and pantries.

Creating a state food security Wisconsin products purchasing or agriculture surplus program with appropriations would sustain the emergency food network's ability to support Wisconsin producers while simultaneously increasing access to nutritious product for those Wisconsin residents and families in need.

**Oppose AB935/SB902: FoodShare work and FoodShare employment and training requirements and drug testing.**

*Work Requirements:* While we know that for those who can work, a good paying job with enough hours is the best path to ending hunger, FoodShare is not a jobs program. It is a nutrition program that supports individuals by providing benefits to supplement their income to meet basic nutrition.

We also know that mandating work requirements, especially as we are still recovering from the pandemic, does not address the real challenges that many of our neighbors face when trying to engage with the labor and training market, such as access to affordable, quality childcare and transportation. For the ABWADs who are out of work, many are often dealing with some of the hardest circumstances in life, such as chronic homelessness, undiagnosed medical conditions, or mental disorders. These circumstances make them extremely hard to reach with services.

*Drug Testing:* The rise of opioid addiction is a very real challenge for far too many Wisconsinites. Providing treatment to people dealing with the health crisis of addiction is important. However, drug testing as a condition for FoodShare benefits is a separate issue and is currently illegal. The FoodShare program already legally drug tests former drug felons as a condition for benefits and so in this way, drug testing is also duplicative of targeted, existing measures.

**Support AB805: providing state aid to reimburse public and private schools that provide free meals to all pupils for the costs of those meals and making an appropriation.**

Healthy School Meals for All would:

- Ensure access to nutritious meals to all students as a key educational and health support;
- Significantly reduce the administrative work required to operate the School Nutrition Programs and improves school nutrition finances;
- Eliminate the tiered eligibility system that limits participation for too many children whose families are struggling to make ends meet;
- Reduce the stigma associated with participating in school meals; and
- Eliminate school meals debt.

**Support AB941/SB929: a commercial driver recruitment program.**

Our food banks rely on the infrastructure and human capacity to move food. Our network is reliant on CDL drivers to distribute food across the state to local food pantries and individuals experiencing food insecurity. Proposed appropriations to establish three programs, including scholarships, training, and recruitment will ensure that food banks have the capacity they need to carry out their mission.

**Contact**

Stephanie Dorfman, Executive Director, [sdorfman@feedingwi.org](mailto:sdorfman@feedingwi.org), 608-960-4517.

Together, we are leading the way Forward together toward a healthy and hunger-free Wisconsin. For more information, please visit our website at [www.FeedingWI.org](http://www.FeedingWI.org).