

Governor Walker & Wisconsin State Legislators,

As organizations that work every day with and on behalf of Wisconsin's most vulnerable individuals, we have come together to voice our concerns about most of the bills in the Governor's special legislative session on welfare reform.

We share the goal of helping people find and maintain family-supporting jobs, and we share the goal of breaking down the barriers that all too often stand between individuals and sustainable, good jobs.

But many of these bills will not accomplish those shared goals. These bills will instead significantly increase administrative costs and barriers to needed assistance for struggling families. And even when exemptions are considered, research has found that disproportionately many people hurt by work requirements in programs like FoodShare are in fact people with disabilities, health conditions, and caregivers. These proposals have the potential to deprive vulnerable families and children of the most essential basic needs – food, healthcare and shelter.

These harsh measures do not reflect our Wisconsin values and will put the health and safety of our community members at risk.

We support proven, effective solutions to help individuals and families escape poverty, not costly, unproven, punitive, ineffective measures.

A package of bills that truly reflects what is both effective and needed to assist Wisconsin's vulnerable individuals and families would:

- 1) Address the tremendous transportation barriers facing low-income workers and their families statewide, including lack of access to reliable vehicles and suspensions of driver's licenses due to poverty;
- 2) Expand access to meaningful jobs skills training and educational opportunities through our excellent Wisconsin technical college system;
- 3) Ensure adequate funding for child care assistance, and ensure child care availability that meets the often erratic schedules of the low-wage workplace;
- 4) Raise Wisconsin's minimum wage so that no one working in our state still lives in poverty; and
- 5) Recognize and address the unique situations and barriers to employment facing unpaid caregivers, survivors of violence, people with disabilities, and other particularly vulnerable populations.

We ask Wisconsin's legislators to:

- Set aside these bills and invest in solutions that work; proven, effective solutions that will create paths out of poverty, not costly administrative and bureaucratic hurdles that harm vulnerable families who are trying to make ends meet; and
- Hold public hearings on these issues throughout the state at times and places when people who rely on these programs and who are trying to get out of poverty can provide real input. Just as legislators have ideas about how to make Medicaid, FoodShare, and Wisconsin Shares more effective, our neighbors and fellow community members who use these programs during hard times also have ideas for what they need to escape poverty. Those stakeholders should be at the table before further reforms are deliberated in the Capitol.

We stand ready to partner with legislators to craft proposals that will truly address barriers to work and lead to stable employment and paths out of poverty.

Sincerely,

ACLU of Wisconsin  
Advocates of Ozaukee  
The Arc Wisconsin  
Association for Prevention of Family Violence (APFV)  
AVAIL Inc.  
Beloit Domestic Violence Survivor Center  
The Bridge to Hope  
Community Advocates Public Policy Institute  
Community Referral Agency  
Congregations United to Serve Humanity (CUSH)  
Disability Rights Wisconsin  
Domestic Abuse Intervention Services (DAIS)  
End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin  
Fair Wisconsin  
Family Advocates, Inc.  
Family Voices of Wisconsin  
Feeding Wisconsin  
Forward Kenosha  
Green Haven  
Harbor House  
HELP of Door County  
Hunger Relief Federation  
Hunger Task Force  
In Courage  
JOSHUA

Kids Forward  
Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians  
League of Women Voters of Wisconsin  
Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin  
Madison-area Urban Ministry  
Mental Health America of Wisconsin  
Milwaukee Center for Children and Youth  
Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force  
Milwaukee Shelter and Transitional Housing Task Force  
MOSES (Madison Organizing in Strength, Equality and Solidarity)  
NARAL Pro-Choice Wisconsin  
National Association of Social Workers, Wisconsin  
Oakwood Haven Domestic Abuse/Sexual Assault Shelter  
PAVE People Against Domestic and Sexual Abuse (PADA)  
Racine Interfaith Coalition (RIC)  
Safe Harbor of Sheboygan  
Sharing Center, Inc.  
Society of St. Vincent de Paul - Madison  
Society of St. Vincent de Paul - St. Matthias Conference  
SOPHIA of Waukesha County  
Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations  
Today Not Tomorrow - Project Babies  
Tri-County Council  
Turningpoint  
Violence Intervention Project, Inc.  
Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health  
Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault (WCASA)  
Wisconsin Community Action Program Association (WISCAP)  
Wisconsin Community Services  
Wisconsin Council of Churches  
Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice  
WISDOM  
The Women's Community  
Women's Resource Center of Racine  
Worker Justice Wisconsin  
YWCA Madison  
9to5 Wisconsin

# We Stand Together

