



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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Assembly Democrats Highlight Wasteful Spending in FoodShare Limitation, Drug Testing Bills

MADISON – Democratic members of the Assembly Committee on Public Benefit Reform today shared their concerns over proposals to severely limit FoodShare purchases (AB 177) and to implement costly programs to drug test people for job training or unemployment benefits (ABs 191 and 192).

“A budget that makes deep cuts to public education and lifeline programs like SeniorCare has Republicans desperate to distract, so desperate that they’re willing to play politics with the food on folks’ tables and the roofs over their heads,” said Rep. Andy Jorgensen (D-Milton).

Assembly Bill 177 requires people who receive FoodShare benefits to spend 67% - or, two-thirds – of their benefit dollars on an extremely limited list of Republican-approved foods, consisting largely of the WIC list, meant for pregnant and breastfeeding women, infants, and children under the age of five. A non-partisan fiscal analysis shows the proposal would cost, at minimum, \$3.5 million.

“Instead of directing much-needed dollars to our public schools, Republicans would spend millions to be the food police,” said Rep. Evan Goyke (D-Milwaukee). “Their misplaced priorities are hurting people – and they stand to continue to hurt people.”

“Republicans claim to promote smaller government and fiscal conservatism. In the case of AB 177, they have found a way to spend millions to shrink government just small enough to fit in your grocery cart,” said Rep. Lisa Subeck (D-Madison).

Democrats were able to make small improvements to AB 177, managing to add all poultry, all potatoes, cranberries, and bulk items to the Republicans’ limited list of “allowed” foods. They also supported an amendment to add all dairy products. But, Republicans refused to make exceptions for seniors, or for people with medically-prescribed diets.

“This bill adds insult to injury for those in need. The Republican budget stands to cut prescription drug coverage and medical care options, and this bill would limit folks’ food choices, as well,” said Rep. Deb Kolste (D-Janesville). “There are better ways to spend taxpayer dollars, and better ways to care for our neighbors.”

“I’m disappointed that, instead of working on legislation to help our friends and neighbors find careers with living wages, Republicans spent the day forcing bills through that micromanage the lives of an already vulnerable population,” said Spreitzer. “Today’s bills are nothing more than

political theater designed to distract from a Republican budget that will be disastrous for Wisconsin families.”

The members noted that no state has ever obtained the waiver AB 177 requests to limit FoodShare purchases, highlighting the political motivation behind the proposal. AB 177 was approved on a 8-6 vote.

ABs 191 and 192 were also approved, 8-6. In a shocking move, Republicans refused to consider a Democratic amendment to also require legislators to drug test for their taxpayer-funded salaries and benefits.

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