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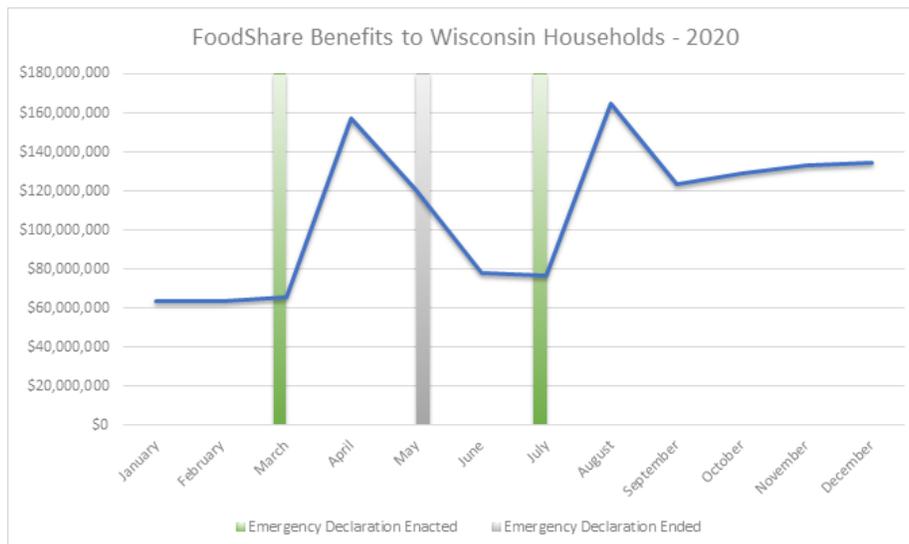
Repeal of Wisconsin Public Health Declaration Will Have Devastating Impact on Hunger

Wisconsin Assembly faces making \$100M mistake

MILWAUKEE – (January 27, 2021) – The impending repeal of our state’s Public Health Emergency declaration by the Wisconsin Assembly Thursday morning will have devastating effects on hungry children, families and seniors statewide. At stake is \$100M in federal funding that is ultimately being ignored by the Wisconsin Legislature as they reconsider reversing the mask mandate, reopening businesses, churches and bars.

This detrimental decision to repeal Wisconsin’s State of Emergency order will eliminate the opportunity for Wisconsin’s hungry to receive Emergency FoodShare benefits. The public is urged to take immediate action by calling Wisconsin Assembly members and appealing to their common sense interests in continuing to feed Wisconsin’s hungry and supporting local farmers, food producers and grocery stores.

“What the legislature is not considering are the Emergency FoodShare benefits provided by the federal government,” said Sherrie Tussler, Executive Director of Hunger Task Force. “At the onset of the pandemic, Wisconsin was paying out approximately \$60M in monthly federal benefits to aid the poor. In April 2020, that number escalated to nearly \$160M when federal Emergency FoodShare benefits became available due to the Emergency Declaration. It is imperative for the general public—and by proxy, their elected representatives—to realize that \$100M put food on the table for the recently unemployed, seniors and the rural poor throughout Wisconsin.”



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When Wisconsin's Public Health Emergency ended in May 2020, these Emergency FoodShare benefits were no longer available to hungry Wisconsinites. As a result, total FoodShare payments plummeted down to \$80M. On July 30, the declaration was extended, Emergency FoodShare from the federal government became available and hungry Wisconsinites received \$160M in Emergency FoodShare benefits once again.

Seniors will be one of the most affected population in Wisconsin; approximately 25% of FoodShare recipients are elderly, blind or disabled. As age, preexisting conditions and compromised immune systems significantly effect a senior's ability to shop for groceries or take public transportation safely, the increase in Emergency FoodShare benefits have been life-saving. Most seniors went from receiving just \$16/month in FoodShare benefits to \$204/month during Wisconsin's Public Health Emergency declaration.

"Thursday's repeal vote places hungry Wisconsinites at risk of deeper hunger, additional pain and lasting suffering caused by the pandemic," said Tussler. "This repeal vote is not just about masks—it's about feeding our neighbors.

"Emergency FoodShare is 100% federally funded, so in effect, our state Legislature is voting to turn away federal assistance in a pandemic without regard for people in need."

Hunger Task Force is Milwaukee's Free & Local food bank and Wisconsin's anti-hunger leader. The organization provides healthy and nutritious food to hungry children, families and seniors in the community absolutely free of charge. Hunger Task Force was founded in 1974 by a local advocacy group who then formed Milwaukee's first food bank. Today, Hunger Task Force is 100% supported by the community and provides a safety net of emergency food with dignity to a network of 75 food pantries, soup kitchens and homeless shelters. Through legislative analysis, education and community organizing, Hunger Task Force continues to advocate for anti-hunger policy at the local, state and federal level. For more information, visit HungerTaskForce.org.

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