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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
February 28, 2017

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Statement of Madison Mayor Paul Soglin on Gov. Walker's Farm to School Budget Cuts

Governor Scott Walker sent a strong and unfortunate message to the people of Wisconsin by cutting funding for Farm to School programming in his 2017-2019 Executive Budget.

That message: The health of Wisconsin schoolchildren and vitality of Wisconsin farmers is unimportant when the State can save a few pennies to eliminate a program that provides over \$9 million in local food to over 565,000 students in Wisconsin.¹

Farm to School has been on the rise in Wisconsin since the creation of the Program Coordinator position in 2009, which has secured hundreds of thousands in dollars and grants and connected millions of dollars in funding to Wisconsin farmers. When you consider the size of Gov. Walker's 2-year budget – over \$76 billion – and the money historically spent on supporting Farm to School in the state annually – \$86,200 – it would appear that this position, as well as the Farm to School Advisory Council, have been pretty good investments for the state².

Staffing the Farm to School Program in Wisconsin is great for schoolchildren, farmers, and Wisconsin agricultural economy. The impetus behind forcing the Farm to School Coordinator position to lapse and the Farm to School Advisory Council to disband is a fake austerity measure. To allow this program, which has been a trailblazer in the nation and has made tremendous gains since the hiring of a Coordinator, to lose staffing support, is a setback in our efforts to get nutritious Wisconsin food to every child.

The State should continue to invest in the livelihood of our farmers and the health of our children by fostering viable economic connections between cash-strapped school districts and local farmers, ensuring that Wisconsin taxpayer dollars support those who both grow our food and reside and invest in our communities.

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