

# Lisa Subeck

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

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## **A Tale of Two Bills**

*Faced with Opportunity to Choose between Best and Worst, Wisdom and Foolishness, Belief and Incredulity, Hope and Despair... Committee Republicans Punt, Advancing Both Bills*

MADISON –Today, Representative Lisa Subeck (D-Madison), ranking Democrat on the Assembly Committee on Public Benefit Reform, criticized Republican members of the Committee for declining to choose between incentivizing healthy food purchases through the FoodShare program and restricting food choices for FoodShare participants. The two bills considered by the committee, Assembly Bills 501 and 530, take radically different approaches to promoting healthy choices in FoodShare purchasing. AB 501 takes a positive, evidence-based approach by incentivizing healthy purchases through discounts and, in turn, enables shoppers to stretch their FoodShare budget. AB 530 takes a negative and restrictive approach, not supported by evidence, by creating a list of restricted or banned foods based on some set of unidentified standards. AB 501 passed unanimously with bipartisan support, while AB 530 passed on a party line vote with all Republicans voting yes.

“Today, the Public Benefit Reform Committee was faced with a clear choice between two radically different approaches to reaching the goal of promoting healthy food purchases in the FoodShare program,” said Rep. Subeck. “This was truly a tale of two bills – best and worst, wisdom and foolishness, belief and incredulity, hope and despair – and faced with these clear choices, committee Republicans punted by passing both bills.”

The incentive based approach utilized in the bi-partisan AB 501 mirrors similar programs such as the USDA’s Healthy Incentives Pilot which produced significant increases in purchases of fresh, healthy foods. AB 530 takes a restrictive approach, creating a list of foods that must be limited or banned from FoodShare purchases. USDA guidance cautions against such a restrictive approach, citing federal dietary guidance that applies to the total diet and a lack of widely accepted standards to determine what foods are healthy vs. unhealthy. The pilot program and related study under AB 501 would cost approximately \$700,000, while AB 530 would cost taxpayers a startling \$12 million or more.

“With two bills before them – one positive and the other punitive, one we can afford and one we cannot, one bipartisan and one politically motivated, one proven effective and the other not – Republicans still could not choose one over the other,” said Rep. Subeck. “In our highly partisan legislative environment, it is rare that a committee has the opportunity to consider and choose between two radically different approaches to one issue at the same time, and it is unfortunate Republicans chose to squander such an opportunity. The positive impact of AB 501 will pale in comparison to the costly, negative impact of AB 530.”

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78TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT