

U.S. Sen. Baldwin and U.S. Reps. Moore, Kind and Pocan: Push for expanded food assistance for Wisconsin in coronavirus relief legislation

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin and U.S. Representatives Gwen Moore, Ron Kind and Mark Pocan today called on Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer, Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy to prioritize the needs of participants in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in the next coronavirus relief bill to ensure that SNAP can continue to play a role in enhancing Wisconsin families' food security and supporting our economic recovery.

"In these challenging times, more and more families in Wisconsin and across the country are struggling to put food on their tables. As of this writing, over 30 million Americans have filed unemployment claims in the past six weeks, and Wisconsin's unemployment rate has skyrocketed from 3.5 to an estimated 27 percent as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic," wrote the members in their letter.

"SNAP is one of our nation's most important safety nets to lift children, families, and seniors out of poverty, and during this crisis, the program will continue to be a vital line of defense against hunger and malnutrition. As we face historic economic and social disruption during this pandemic, we must bolster the SNAP program and ensure access for those Wisconsinites who need food assistance."

The members highlighted the need to include several SNAP priorities that are

especially important to Wisconsin, including increased benefits and expanded eligibility for low-income college students, newly unemployed workers and low-income military families. They also asked leadership to increase overall SNAP benefits by 15 percent to bolster families' food security and stimulate the economy, raise the minimum SNAP allowance from \$16 to \$30 to support the many seniors receiving this level of benefits, and take action to delay implementation of three U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) rules published in 2019 that would push over a hundred thousand Wisconsinites off the SNAP program and reduce benefits for many others.

The full letter to congressional leadership is available [here](#).

"People in Wisconsin are struggling. During this unprecedented public health and economic crisis, we must make sure that everyone in Wisconsin has access to food, as charity alone cannot meet the demand," said Sherrie Tussler, Executive Director of Hunger Task Force. "Hunger Task Force works closely with those most vulnerable, both in Milwaukee and statewide, and we see firsthand the impact COVID-19 on the low-income community—especially children, seniors and college students. It's crucial that we prioritize support for these groups in this trying time of increased need."

"FoodShare is a crucial lifeline that we need to make available to the Wisconsinites that need it. Enhanced flexibilities and improved access are crucial to meeting these needs under the unique challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic," said Jim Jones, Director of the Division of Medicaid Services at the Wisconsin Department of Health Services.