

Gov. Evers: ICYMI: Wisconsinites urge lawmakers to support FoodShare, prevent Wisconsinites from paying hundreds of millions of dollars in penalty fees to the Trump Administration

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MADISON — Agribusinesses, hunger relief organizations, and advocacy groups from across Wisconsin recently held a press conference in Madison urging lawmakers to approve key investments and resources designed to prevent Wisconsin taxpayers from having to pay as much as \$205 million in penalty fees to the Trump Administration each year, an effort Gov. Evers and the Evers Administration have [implored the Legislature to support](#) for months, including in the governor's 2026 State of the State address last week.

More than 160 nonpartisan organizations have asked the Legislature to [take immediate action](#) to provide funding for these changes, noting that “additional delays in providing this funding will put Wisconsin taxpayers at risk of paying for increased costs and will negatively impact communities, businesses, and SNAP recipients across Wisconsin,” a message Gov. Evers emphasized in his [legislative priorities letter](#) earlier this year and his 2026 State of the State [address](#), in which he similarly implored lawmakers to urgently approve these funds.

Because of President Donald Trump's so-called 'Big Beautiful Bill,' Wisconsin taxpayers will already be on the hook for [over \\$284 million](#) in new costs in future state budgets. A broad coalition of stakeholders ranging from agricultural advocates

and healthcare associations to community food banks, social services organizations, and more, implored lawmakers to approve roughly \$70 million in funding the state needs to implement control measures and cover the federal cut to administrative costs associated with changes to the state's FoodShare program brought on by President Trump's 'Big Beautiful Bill. Without this funding, which is essential to implement changes under the 'Big Beautiful Bill,' Wisconsin taxpayers could have to pay as much as \$200 million in penalty fees to the Trump Administration each year.

Additional information on stakeholder support of efforts to keep FoodShare payment error rates low and save Wisconsin taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars in potential future costs is available [here](#).

"FoodShare dollars don't sit still. They circulate through Wisconsin's economy, strengthening our farms, our processors, and our communities in every corner of this state. The funding request now before the Legislature—\$69.2 million—is not an expansion of benefits. It is a cost-avoidant strategy made necessary by recent federal policy changes, shifting 75 percent of SNAP administrative costs to the states beginning in October," said Rebekah Sweeney, Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association Senior Director, Programs and Policy. "Spending \$69 million is hard, but it means that we would avoid losses of up to \$200 million later and would also protect \$1 billion in spending in federal food purchasing power. That's not big government—it's fiscal responsibility, and it offers stability."

"At a time when dairy markets are already volatile, we cannot handle another shock to the system. This is a bipartisan issue—our membership is made up, of course, like the public, of Democrats and Republicans, and this is something we have all agreed on," said Andy Hatch, owner of Uplands Cheese. "Our core mission is to feed people and to support our communities, rural and urban, and it is why we've come together with people across the state to ask our lawmakers to fund the requested \$69 million and make sure that there is not obstruction to FoodShare."

"The \$69.2 million dollar request again is not about expanding benefits—it is a fiscally responsible investment to protect children from hunger, to honor our veterans who served our country, to support working families, and to prevent federal penalties that could exceed \$200 million each year—costs that could ultimately fall on Wisconsin taxpayers," said Reno Wright, Hunger Task Force Public Policy and Advocacy Director. "Federal law has changed—now Wisconsin must respond with stability, with responsibility, and with urgency. Because when children

are fed, they learn. When veterans are supported, they rebuild. When working families are stable, communities thrive. This is what this investment protects, and that is why our legislators should act now and approve this funding.”

The Legislature has had a roughly \$70 million ask in front of them [since August](#) of last year aimed at preventing Wisconsin taxpayers from having to pay penalty fees to the Trump Administration. The Evers Administration has spent months in the wake of the 2025-27 Biennial Budget’s passage, which was enacted just days before the ‘Big Beautiful Bill’ was passed, urging Republican lawmakers to approve the necessary investments and staffing resources the state needs to begin implementing components of the ‘Big Beautiful Bill,’ as required by law. During bipartisan budget negotiations, Republican leaders gave the governor their word that they would be willing to work together to address outstanding challenges caused by the ‘Big Beautiful Bill.’

Last week, the Wisconsin State Assembly [passed](#) bipartisan [legislation](#) to provide the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) with the position authority and funding needed to keep the state’s FoodShare error rate low and avoid federal penalties, and now, the measure is being considered for approval by the Wisconsin State Senate. The governor has [vowed](#) to call the Legislature back into special session at any time during 2026 if key priorities, including efforts to protect Wisconsinites from having to pay burdensome fees to the Trump Administration due to federal changes to FoodShare, remain unfinished.

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND ON THE STATE’S EFFORTS TO KEEP FOODSHARE PAYMENT ERROR RATES LOW AND SAVE WISCONSIN TAXPAYERS HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS IN POTENTIAL FUTURE COSTS

Roughly 700,000 Wisconsinites, including nearly 270,000 kids, rely on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) aid, also known as [FoodShare in Wisconsin](#), and last year, Republicans in the U.S. Congress passed the ‘Big Beautiful Bill,’ which cut essential SNAP food assistance by about 20 percent by increasing red tape, nutrition education programs, and forcing states to pay more for SNAP programs like Wisconsin’s FoodShare. Due to these changes, as many as 43,700 Wisconsinites are at immediate risk of losing access to basic food necessities, and independent grocers and convenience stores, which already operate on thin margins, are often the main source of food for Wisconsinites in rural areas, are increasingly concerned about their bottom line and keeping their doors open.

Additionally, under the new federal changes, states will be forced to pay for a higher share of SNAP benefit costs if payment error rates exceed certain thresholds. In Wisconsin, based on recent fiscal year 2025 data, this could cost taxpayers an additional over \$200 million every year, or \$400 million over the course of our two-year state budget cycle, not including the [more than \\$280 million](#) it will already cost Wisconsin taxpayers to implement other changes included in Republicans' so-called 'Big Beautiful Bill.'

The governor has maintained that this is untenable for Wisconsin taxpayers and will blow a hole in future state budgets, but that the Legislature can act now and help prevent Wisconsinites from having to pay over \$200 million in penalties to the federal government. DHS [identified](#) a need for an additional \$69.2 million in state fiscal years 2025-27 to implement the identified quality control measures and to cover the federal cut to administrative costs, and approval of these funds has now been [publicly supported](#) by a broad coalition of agribusinesses, hunger relief stakeholders, and advocacy groups from across the state.

As detailed in their letter, the \$69.2 million in funding would include \$32.4 million to cover the increase in the state's share of administrative costs as a result of the 'Big Beautiful Bill,' which shifted 75 percent of administrative costs to states, as opposed to the current 50 percent, \$16.1 million for additional DHS and county staff positions to achieve and maintain a FoodShare error rate below six percent and avoid federal penalties, and \$20.7 million to support an increase in participation in the FoodShare Employment and Training program due to expanded work requirements.

An online version of this release is available [here](#).