

Krohn, Margaret

From: Ellen Carlson <ellen@wayforwardresources.org>
Sent: Monday, October 23, 2023 5:59 PM
To: Krohn, Margaret
Subject: Opposition to P and C Amendments 5, 6, 8 and 10

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This message came from outside your organization.

I missed the opportunity to speak because I registered for Wednesday's meeting instead of today's. I am submitting my opposition via this route per the agenda. Thank you.

Dane County Finance and Personnel Committee

My name is Ellen Carlson and I am the Executive Director of WayForward Resources, formally known as Middleton Outreach Ministry. I am also a resident of District 6. WayForward Resources offers food security programs, case management, and eviction prevention resources to increase the stability of residents West Madison, Middleton and Cross Plains.

I am speaking in opposition to 2024 Operating Budget Amendments P&F-0-05, 0-06, 0-08, & 0-10 all which seek to reduce the funding to Second Harvest Food Bank's Farm to Foodbank program. WayForward is a proud partner agency of Second Harvest Food Bank, along with nearly 100 other food pantries throughout Dane County who also rely on the partnership of SHFB.

We are currently serving more people than at any other time in our 40-year history. Demand for WayForward's food programs is up 200% since January of 2022, due to many large scale factors, including the end of pandemic-era increased foodshare dollars, ongoing inflation at the grocery store, and the increasingly dire situation of rental housing in Dane County. In addition, the rise in food costs continue to make it more expensive for us as an organization to keep our food pantry shelves stocked.

The Farm to Food Bank program provides an innovative and efficient means to close the gap between field to table. In 2022 alone, the program provided 3.8 million meals throughout southwestern Wisconsin.

The Dane County Farm to Foodbank initiative provides our pantry with a consistent and steady supply of produce, milk and eggs, which supports the health and well-being of people who rely on our programs to access their basic food needs. This program allows us to spend our limited purchase dollars on other necessities such as toilet paper and basic whole grains, all things that people in our community need to lead a stable life in Dane County.

Everyday I come to work there is a line of people waiting to use the Food Pantry. Everyday we fill the shelves and freezers and cooler with what we have and distribute it until it's nearly gone.

Every time that Second Harvest truck shows up, we feel a relief as we unload and get ready for our day. We know that people will leave with the nutritious food that they need to thrive. Should all of the proposed amendments pass, the amount allocated to Second Harvest would decrease by 25%. The reallocation of \$1.5 million to other initiatives would result in the loss of more than 541,000 pounds of food

– an equivalent of 450,000 meals into our community at a time when we need it the most. Every one of those meals will be needed by one of your constituents throughout the next year.

I appreciate the needs that you all are seeing through the organizations seeking funds. I ask that you not take away this needed food from people all over Dane County.

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Ellen Carlson (she/her/hers)
Executive Director

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Creating Food Security & Housing Stability