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WISCONSIN PUBLIC HEALTH COUNCIL

*Assure safe and healthy people by monitoring progress on the state health plan,
Healthiest Wisconsin 2020, and on the readiness for public health emergencies.*

DATE: February 28, 2013

TO: The Honorable Ben Brancel
Secretary, Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and
Consumer Protection

FROM: Gary Gilmore, MPH, PhD, MCHES
Chair, Wisconsin Public Health Council

Terri Kramolis, RN, MSHA
Chair, State Health Plan Quality Improvement Committee
Wisconsin Public Health Council

RE: In Support of Farm to School Initiatives

The Wisconsin Public Health Council believes that *it takes the work of many to improve the health of all*. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection has been a longstanding public health system partner. We commend you and the Farm to School Advisory Committee for your collaborative leadership to support local economic development and improve and protect the health of students by assuring access to locally grown fruits and vegetables during the school day.

The work of your Department and the Farm to School Advisory Committee supports our public health efforts to align policies and systems for better health. Shared leadership and collaboration between state governmental agencies directly benefit the public's health by creating conditions in which people can be healthy; in this case, school-age children and youth, teachers, and families. The Wisconsin Public Health Council has taken formal action not only to acknowledge the contributions of your Department but to extend our hand in partnership in furtherance of farm to school initiatives.

The Wisconsin Public Health Council, authorized under Wisconsin Statutes s. 15.19(13) and s. 250.07(1m), oversees progress of *Healthiest Wisconsin 2020: Everyone Living Better, Longer*. Healthiest Wisconsin 2020 is Wisconsin's statewide public health agenda as required in Wisconsin Statutes, Section 250.07 (1) (a):

<http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/hw2020/index.htm>.

Throughout 2012 and to the present, we have been assessing progress and advancing policy recommendations regarding three specific focus areas in the agenda. These areas are:

1. Adequate, appropriate and safe food and nutrition
2. Physical activity
3. Chronic disease prevention and management

As a result of our progress reviews, we attest that:

- For Farm to School to be effective, both the “supply side” and “demand” issues must be considered. These issues include support and incentives for specialty crop production, aggregation, storage, and distribution of product to schools and other institutional markets; the ability of school food services to handle fresh produce; and the acceptability of these foods to students.
- State-level grant resources through *Buy Local*, *Buy Wisconsin* and/or a Farm to School Program will expand the availability of farm-produced foods in Wisconsin schools so there is capacity to expand and sustain this evidence-based approach.
- To be effective in promoting and protecting health, a comprehensive program must include three elements: procurement and distribution of locally grown fruits and vegetables for service in the school, nutrition and agriculture education, and school/youth gardens.
- Farm to School can improve the local economy, change the environment to support locally produced foods, and improve health, especially in vulnerable populations.

The Public Health Council stands ready to assist the Department of Health Services, the Department of Public Instruction, and the Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection in making this a reality. In the near term, please expect a call from Margaret Schmelzer, MS, RN, State Health Plan Director, and Terri Kramolis, member of the Public Health Council, to discuss this letter and identify ways in which the Wisconsin Public Health Council can partner with your Department and the Farm to School Advisory Committee.

Thank you.

Attachment:

Healthiest Wisconsin 2020 Brochure

Copy: Governor Scott Walker

Dennis Smith, Secretary, Wisconsin Department of Health Services

Teresa Engel, Staff, Wisconsin Farm to School Council

Members, Wisconsin Public Health Council

Henry Anderson, MD, State Health Officer

Sandra L. K. Breitborde, Deputy Administrator, Division of Public Health

Karen McKeown, MSN, RN, Administrator, Division of Public Health

Patricia Guhleman, MS, Director, Office of Policy and Practice Alignment

Susan Uttech, MS, Director, Bureau of Community Health Promotion

Mary Pesik, RD, CD, Coordinator, Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Program

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