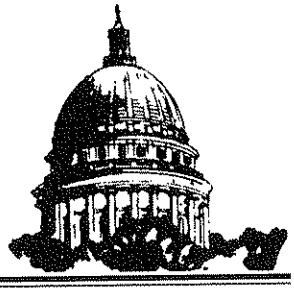
Spencer Coggs



State Senator

Mister Chairman and Members,

Thank you for having this hearing on Senate Bill 24.

This bill would create a check off on the state income tax form to allow for donations to Feeding America, formerly known as Second Harvest, with member offices in Wisconsin. The check off is voluntary and would affect either the amount owed or the refund due to the filer. There are currently check off options to donate to the veterans trust fund, prostate and breast cancer research, multiple sclerosis, a firefighter memorial, and Lambeau Field. The donations from this check off will be divided among the three Feeding America food banks based on the percentage of the state population each serves. America's Second Harvest of Wisconsin in Milwaukee will receive 65%, Second Harvest Food bank of Southern Wisconsin in Madison will receive 20%, and Feed My People in Eau Claire will receive 15% of the donations. It is difficult to estimate how much Feeding America will receive, but based on information from the Department of Revenue, it seems reasonable to assume the new check off would generate at least $100,000 to $150,000 in the first year.

The Feeding America Food banks operate as a clearinghouse for a network of 1500 non-profit programs in Wisconsin that provide hunger relief to more than 335,000 people statewide. As I stated previously, the Milwaukee office covers 65% of that population in 37 counties, the Madison office covers 20% of the population in 16 counties, and the Eau Claire office covers 15% of the population in 22 counties. As the economy has worsened, the demand for hunger relief has increased. There are currently more than 450,000 residents that are living at or below the federal poverty level. As taxpayers are presented with opportunities to donate to causes such as cancer research or the veterans trust fund, I believe that they will also recognize the need and benefit of donating to a cause that will provide food for our fellow citizens in need.

Again, thank you for having this hearing. I look forward to your support of SB 24.

Capitol Address: P.O. Box 7882, Madison, WI 53707-7882 • *Phone:* (608) 266-2500 • *Fax:* (608) 282-3546
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***TOLL FREE:* 1-877-474-2000** • *E-Mail:* sen.coggs@legis.wisconsin.gov

Wisconsin State Legislature
Senate Committee on Health, Health Insurance, Privacy, Property Tax Relief and Revenue

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 24

Robert G. Mohelnitzky, LCSW
President/CEO
Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin

Good Morning, Mr. Chair and members of the committee,

My name is Robert G. Mohelnitzky. I am a licensed clinical social worker in Wisconsin and the President and CEO of Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin. I have over 40 years experience in the Wisconsin nonprofit system and have worked in my current position for eight years.

I am here today to speak in support of Senate Bill 24, a bill to give tax-filing citizens in Wisconsin an opportunity to help their friends and neighbors who do not have enough food to feed themselves or their families.

Our socio-economic system in the United States is comprised of three sectors: the private sector, the government sector and the nonprofit sector. These three sectors working together make America strong and give us a quality of life that would not be possible without them.

Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin, located in Madison, is a Wisconsin nonprofit charitable organization and a member of the national Feeding America food bank network. We are one of the three Feeding America food banks that serve Wisconsin. Our food bank covers 16 counties in the southwestern corner of the state and supplies food and grocery products to over 80,000 people through 450 nonprofit programs such as church food pantries and prepared meal sites.

The primary source of the food that we acquire and distribute comes from the food industry, a private sector organization. The primary distribution system for the food we supply to communities is our well developed and very important network of community-based nonprofits, including churches, community centers, food pantries, shelters and meal sites, such as soup kitchens and meals on wheels programs.

(Over)

The Second Harvest/Feeding America system is run primarily on charitable donations and volunteer time. The food industry receives a "special" tax incentive under the IRS code for donating food, and citizens and corporations receive tax exemptions for donating the money and other resources needed to run the system. Tens of thousands of hours are donated by thousands of volunteers every day in every Wisconsin community to bring food to the people in need in their communities and neighborhoods. It is all three sectors – private, public and nonprofit – working together in a way where the results are greater than the sum of the parts. It is America at its finest.

Senate Bill 24 gives citizens another opportunity to support this wonderfully efficient system at a time of great need. Each day more families are showing up at community food pantries saying that they never thought that they would be the ones asking for help.

With the approval of Senate Bill 24, you can, without additional tax money, give taxpayers the opportunity to increase the impact of the Second Harvest/Feeding America food bank system on alleviating hunger.

I would remind you that the primary source of the food we recover and distribute comes from unsalable and surplus food in the food industry. It is estimated that 35 to 40 percent of all food produced never gets to the table and most often is headed for the landfill. This is perfectly good food, and it should not be buried in landfills when there are people struggling with hunger. This food is *value that has already been created*. The Second Harvest/Feeding America food bank system needs more dollars to acquire it, store it and safely distribute it through our wonderful and caring community-based volunteers and their nonprofit organizations at the neighborhood level. Every dollar results in five to eight meals for someone in need.

Wednesday, March 18, 2009

My name is Barbara McKinney. I coordinate Solomon's Food Pantry at S.S. Morris Community A.M.E. Church on Madison's eastside. We are a partner agency with Second Harvest Food Bank. Through this network of partner agencies, Second Harvest administers food distribution with efficiency and prudent judgment. I am extremely proud to be in partnership with a collective group of committed volunteers who provide emergency food for people who are in need. We provide service to people without judgment. Whatever the life changing event that triggered the need, we treat all people with respect and dignity. We are facing difficult economic times. Food pantries and other food program providers report significant increases in the number of people needing these services. I am here today to support a $1 check-off box on the state tax form to be administered by Second Harvest to help address hunger in our communities. I support the mission of Second Harvest that no child should go to bed hungry. Together, we can address hunger; we can work together to ensure that no family, individual, or elderly person need ever live in a state of hunger. For me, the need to address hunger is not a political issue, but both a personal and humanitarian issue. The reality is that the face of those needing emergency food resources has changed. My son was Mike McKinney. As a young child growing up in St. Louis, MO, we experienced less food on the table in order to stretch my already limited resources. Pride kept me from reaching out for assistance. It was through his personal experiences that Mike launched the NBC-15 Share Your Holidays Food Drive to support the Second Harvest Food Bank. Mike wanted to bring awareness and engage the community in the fight against hunger in a much broader way. Over 13 years later, the generosity of many community partners continues, and Share Your Holidays Food Drive has raised over 17 million meals for distribution through Second Harvest. The support hunger check-off box will provide another opportunity for broad based community participation to support hunger awareness. The revenue generated by this option administered by Second Harvest will be distributed to 72 counties in Wisconsin. The ripple effects of this will impact the quality of life for so many. It also gives people an opportunity to further demonstrate that people do care. Demonstrate that people do matter. On behalf of the people who you may never meet, thank you for your support.

Tax Check-off Testimony
Senate Bill 24
March 18, 2009

Good morning. My name is Bonnie Bellehumeur. I'm the President of America's Second Harvest of Wisconsin. We're located in Milwaukee and the Fox Valley. I'm here because there are increasingly more and more people who need the services of pantries and meal programs in Wisconsin. As a member of Feeding America, the nation's largest domestic hunger relief organization, our mission is to feed the hungry. We have been in existence for 26 years, during which time we alone have provided more than 241 million meals for those in eastern Wisconsin who are unable to provide for themselves. That's enough food to feed everyone in a sold-out Miller Park three meals a day for one and a half years. Of those who rely on our food, nearly 40% of them are children.

I certainly could talk to you today about the immediate crisis facing hundreds of thousands in our state as a result of job loss and home foreclosures. You already know that the impact from this is staggering, and our demand is up nearly 30% as a result. But what I would like to impress upon you today is that hunger in our state is not something that ever goes away entirely, as much as we would like that. This tax check-off will enable Feeding America Food Banks in Wisconsin to help meet the immediate needs of those affected by the current economic downturn; but it will also provide ongoing support for those who, beyond this crisis, continue to need a helping hand.

Feeding America food banks provide food to pantries, meals programs, soup kitchens, shelters and other charitable feeding organizations that would find it

nearly impossible to continue their efforts to feed the hungry were it not for the food we supply. As one of the most efficient charities in the nation, we are able to gather food from every source on the food chain -- from farmers, manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers and even individuals who help by participating in local food drives. Because of our national affiliation, we are also able to access and supply foods that are rarely or never available through donations in our own state, like cereal, rice, meat, and fresh fruit.

There are three Feeding America food banks covering the entire state of Wisconsin, ours in Milwaukee with an additional branch in the Fox Valley serves eastern Wisconsin; one in Madison that serves southwestern Wisconsin and one in Eau Claire that serves northwestern Wisconsin. We receive no public funding, yet combined, the food we distribute is equal to an estimated 19 million meals every year.

Because of our statewide coverage, this tax check-off bill makes incredible sense, allowing taxpayers from all over the state to make a difference right in their own communities. With the money anticipated to be collected through this effort, combined we will be able to provide an additional 1.2 million meals every year that will help struggling families and individuals in Wisconsin.

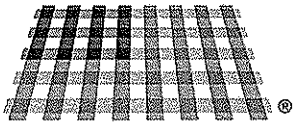
Let me share with you why Feeding America food banks make sense for this tax check-off bill. To start with, we belong to a national organization of 206 food banks. We are held to the highest standards and guidelines related to safe food handling, warehousing, and relationships with feeding programs, food donors and financial donors. We utilize a product tracking system that allows

for quick and efficient recalls of questionable product – the most recent being peanut product recall. As Wisconsin Feeding America food banks, we are a statewide network, touching every county from Kenosha to Vilas and Sheboygan to Eau Claire. Together, we provide the safety net for Wisconsin's neediest citizens.

This bill will give individuals in Wisconsin the ability to support our efforts to feed their neighbors, to provide the most basic of life's necessities, and to give those who are hurting a reason for hope.

I urge you to approve Senate Bill 24 and give the promise of a brighter future to those who are unable to put food on the table for themselves and their families.

Bonnie J. Bellehumeur
President
America's Second Harvest of Wisconsin



America's Second Harvest of Wisconsin
Ending Hunger
A member of FEEDING AMERICA

Feeding America Food Banks in Wisconsin

- America's Second Harvest of Wisconsin – Milwaukee and Fox Valley
  Service Territory: Eastern Wisconsin

- Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin – Madison
  Service Territory: Southwestern Wisconsin

- Feed My People Food Bank – Eau Claire
  Service Territory: Northwestern Wisconsin

Benefits of the Feeding America Network of Food Banks

- We are members of Feeding America, the nation's largest domestic hunger relief organization, consisting of 206 food banks.
- We provide state-wide coverage to ensure hunger relief for all citizens in need in Wisconsin.
- We are held accountable through high standards required by Feeding America for:
  - Safe Food Handling and Warehousing
  - Transportation
  - Record Keeping
  - Donor Relations
  - Distribution and Product Recall
- We have access to more than 300 national food donors, like ConAgra Foods, Del Monte, Kellogg's, Kraft, General Mills, Wal-Mart, Riceland Foods, Tyson Foods and others.
- We have access to national financial contributions through such donors as: American Idol, The Starr Foundation, The Lincy Foundation, Pampered Chef and others.

The Work of Wisconsin's Feeding America Food Banks

- We serve more than 1,500 hunger relief agencies including pantries, meal programs, soup kitchens and shelters.
- We provide an estimated 19 million meals annually.
- We engage the public and raise awareness about the issue of hunger.
- We advocate for increases in assistance for those at most risk, including Food Stamps and The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP).

March 18, 2009

Wisconsin Food Bank Territories

FEEDING AMERICA™

- Milwaukee/Fox Valley
- Madison
- Eau Claire
- Shared

March 18, 2009
Senate Bill 24
Tax Check-off to Support Feeding America food banks in Wisconsin

Jim Milner
Vice Chairman, Board of Directors, America's Second Harvest of Wisconsin

Good morning Mr. Chair and members of the committee. My name is Jim Milner and I am the Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors for America's Second Harvest of Wisconsin. As a collective body, we support SB24 and we are hopeful to receive your support.

Governance, leadership and guidance are the pillars of this Board of Directors and I can assure you that we are very serious about our role to enhance the mission of this organization.

On a personal note, I joined the Board not only because I wanted to continue making meaningful contributions to the community across our State, but because I believe in the mission of America's Second Harvest of Wisconsin and I respect the work that this Board and Staff do every day to help feed the hungry.

Every year, Second Harvest of Wisconsin distributes 11 million meals to 1,100 programs throughout eastern Wisconsin. In addition to providing food to these programs, Second Harvest also provides training to improve operations at the pantry level including safe food handling, fundraising and grant writing assistance.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the efficiency with which we operate. For every $1 donation, Second Harvest of Wisconsin can provide $10 worth of food. Donors can rest assured that their gift to the food bank will stretch much farther than it would at other organizations.

The sheer impact of this organization is evident in the lives of the people they touch like children who come to after school programs for a hot meal, families who stand in line for bags of groceries to make it through to the next pay check and seniors who are choosing between prescription medication and food.

Second Harvest of Wisconsin opened its doors in 1982 and as unfortunate as it may be, today we may be serving the grandchildren of those who received food from Second Harvest years ago.

In closing, I urge you to support SB24. Moving this bill forward will ensure that Wisconsin food banks will continue to supply programs throughout the state with life nourishing food.

GOOD MORNING: HONORABLE SENATORS

My name is James A. Taylor Jr.

I represent Family House, Inc. , This testimony applies to Senate Bill 24

I have been Operation Manager for 17 Years. I feel honored to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves.

We at Family House, Inc., a Community Based Residential Facility, located in one of the highest crime rates, highest foreclosure rates, and one of the highest unemployment rates in the state.

We have been blessed to have a Faith Driven Mission that serves all who enter our doors. Our programs include:

- Senior Meals and Snacks
- Summer lunch programs with Milwaukee Public Schools
- Food Bank
- Homework Mentoring
- Computer Classes (in which graduates receive their own personal computer)
- Men of Vision (where men who are community based, teach our young men how to be positive leaders in the community)
  We also have a Food For Thought program in which we serve dinner to all who come and listen to speaker on topics such as:
  - Healthcare
  - Food Nutrition
  - Home Improvement

We all know from the Media how many jobs that were lost in Wisconsin which in turn cause a increase in people requesting food baskets. We have given out more food than ever before, a 37% increase over 2008. We now have Saturday and Sunday Food Bank hours.

We at Family House, Inc. feel that through the food baskets, food preparation and storage, bulk value buying education information we put out in the community must have a positive effect on everyone. Simply put; how can a child learn when their stomachs growl louder than the teacher's voice.

If we honestly feel the future of America, rest on our next generation of young people, why can't we in Wisconsin lead the nation by passing this bill and feeding our kids and families.

We at Family House, Inc. have been blessed to be involved with Second Harvest for more than 17 years. They supply at least 89% of all our food and paper product needs. More important is the money we save by shopping through their food bank allows our mission to use those saved funds to purchase products and fund our programs in which our people truly need.

The link that exists between not just the people of Milwaukee, Madison or Ormo is heaven sent. We simply couldn't help all the people we do without the help we receive from Second Harvest and their wide ranging Network.

Thank you!!!!!!!!

James A. Taylor. Jr
Operations Manager
Family House, Inc.

March 18, 2009
Senate Bill 24
Tax Check-off to Support Feeding America food banks in Wisconsin

Russ Haberman
Director of Sherman Park Ministries

Good morning Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. My name is Russ Haberman and I am the director of Sherman Park Ministries. We operate two food panties in Milwaukee County. I felt passionately enough about this bill to drive to Madison today to share with you the picture of hunger as I see it through the eyes of the clients who rely on us for their next meal. Sherman Park Ministries has been feeding the hungry for the past 27 years and I have served as director for the past 14 years. The two food pantries that I oversee are volunteer organizations staffed with dedicated people that give generously of their time every week to ensure that hungry people have food. In addition, our program has been recognized by Second Harvest and other agencies for outstanding service to the community

Thanks to our partnership with America's Second Harvest of Wisconsin we have nutritious food to fill our pantry bags with. America's Second Harvest of Wisconsin is our sole provider of food and without them, we couldn't operate our pantries. We have worked side by side with Second Harvest of Wisconsin for more than 20 years and we deeply appreciate the service they provide to the community. The meat, canned goods, produce, bread and dairy items we receive from Second Harvest ensures that our clients won't go to bed hungry.

Through our two pantries, Divine Word Lutheran and Trinity Presbyterian we fed nearly 17,000 individuals last year and 6,100 households. The majority of our clients are over age 55. These are people who have recently lost a job, seen a reduction in their hours or have watched their retirement funds disappear before their eyes. These people are part of a growing class of working poor who have fallen through the cracks of the economy and never imagined they'd find themselves in line at a food pantry. They are forced to overcome their resistance to the idea of asking for help, but once they do come to the pantry they can receive a bag of groceries to help make it through the tough times.

The current state of the economy has shone a light on the lives of many people who are struggling to make ends meet. We have seen some of these people at the pantry. Recently, we've experienced a 20 percent increase in the number of people we feed. With the increased need, we have been forced to distribute more food.

With demand at food pantries on the rise, the time couldn't be better to ask Wisconsin residents for their support of food banks like Second Harvest of Wisconsin. Taxpayer contributions will help ensure that our work on the front lines of hunger relief continues to meet the demand. In a country as wealthy as ours and in a state as food rich as Wisconsin, no one should go to bed hungry. Together, Sherman Park Ministries and Second Harvest are providing one of life's basic necessities- food. On behalf of the clients we serve, I urge you to support Senate Bill 24.

HARVEST OF FRIENDS, INC.

Home of Harvest of Friends Food Pantry
and
Winter Back Pack Program

March 16, 2009

Re: Senate Bill 24,
Feeding America Tax Checkoff

Dear Chairman Erpenbach and Distinguished Committee Members,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity, to speak to you this morning. My name is Blaire Shydlowski, and I am the President of the Harvest of Friends Food Pantry in Winter, WI., located in the southeastern part of Sawyer County, with a population of 344. I am here today representing the four food pantries in Sawyer County, WI. Together, we provide 600 families or approximately 1670 people, with 3-4 days of food each month. On average, each family receives 47 lbs. of food each month. The monthly distribution of our four food pantries is an average of 28,200 lbs. of food. Our target population is children living in poverty, working poor, unemployed, disabled, homeless, and Seniors living on fixed incomes.

Each of the pantries has their own means of operation, distribution, and core of volunteers. Each of us has seen increases of 20-40%, in the number of families coming for food assistance in the last year. After six years of running my food pantry, I have come to know the families quite well. The culture of poverty in our communities has a face with no hope, and little sparkle in the eyes. Unlike six years ago, the families who attended were somewhat clean and presentable, now we have people coming who smell from not bathing, because their water was shut off. And because of this, we try to provide drinking water. While picking up some donations at the Radisson Post Office one day, I noticed one of our families driving a car, with no door on it, and four rusty milk cans in the trunk. Do you know where she was headed? To the town water supply, so that she could haul in water.

I deliver to an 84 year old woman, who lives alone, and still fills her own wood stove, and lives on $450.monthly. She is so proud, and goes through the box of food, and gives me back the items she won't use, so someone else can have them.

We have a single Dad who has three boys, who comes to our pantry regularly. This family has been attending for the last few years, and the boys like coming. Especially when they get their back packs (weekend meals for the month). Wyatt got so excited the first few times he came, that when he arrived home, he ran to the neighbors to show them all of the food that was his.

Many of the families drive 20 miles to receive food assistance, and they don't come alone. We have seen as many as four men packed into a small car with boxes and bags on their laps and under their arms.

P.O. Box 343 • Winter, Wisconsin 54896
715-266-8602

As a group, we believe that we live in a "Food Desert". Rural country communities can not provide the source of food we need, with the revenue we have available. Harvest of Friends relies heavily on Feed My People Food Bank, to maintain the inventory to stock the shelves of our pantry. Our pantry receives 97% of the food we distribute from Feed My People. We receive truck deliveries twice a month, so that our shelves can remain stocked. As a group, the four food pantries receive 68% of their food from Feed My People. Should there no longer be a food bank to purchase supplies from, we wouldn't exist for long.

For years I have been talking to organizations and companies about the crisis at hand, and they just didn't get it. People couldn't understand why there were so many families in need of assistance, even though we live in a county where the unskilled worker is making minimum wage. Now with this disastrous economy, every one understands, because there isn't a person who isn't personally affected by what is going on. Our favorite sponsor for the Stuff the Van Food Drive during the holidays is shutting his doors. Our local grocer who is very sensitive to our cause, is not donating much food, because he doesn't have the sales at his store. With the lack of "Free Food Donations", our cost of food has almost doubled in the last year.

Feeding families through food pantries is a 24/7 job, which many volunteers assume. None of us want to let down the families who are relying on us to provide them with food. And so we take what we do very seriously, because after all being hungry is a serious situation.

We can not assume that the level of financial support we have had in the past, will be there in the future. The tax checkoff for Feeding America/ Second Harvest in Wisconsin, would allow a conduit to the food banks to bring more food at affordable prices, for the pantries to distribute.

We need your support, for the opportunity to raise more funds for Feeding America/ Second Harvest, WI., so that all pantries can sustain the levels of food needed to feed the hungry.

On behalf of the families we feed, and its' volunteers, we thank you for the opportunity to present our testimony.

Sincerely,

Blaire Shydlowski

Blaire Shydlowski
President
Harvest of Friends, Inc.

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 24

Emily Moore, Executive Director
Feed My People Food Bank
March 18, 2009

My name is Emily Moore, executive director of Feed My People Food Bank located in Eau Claire. I am representing 23 counties in north western Wisconsin. Everyday people in Wisconsin go hungry and it's not just in the big cities. 87% of the communities we serve are rural.

There are approximately 75,000 people struggling with hunger in northwestern Wisconsin. The Feeding America food bank network ensures that hunger relief resources are distributed equitably statewide. In northwestern WI it provides food to more than 100 nonprofit programs. Each month, these programs reach approximately 18,000 individuals who are struggling with hunger.

Last fall, I asked the food pantry directors who attended a gathering we held what was different for them in recent months. They pointed to three significant changes: 1) more people using food assistance for the first time, 2) more people with jobs but unable to make ends meet and 3) larger households, primarily as a result of grandparents taking grandchildren in and the increased occurrence of households doubling and tripling up to reduce costs. When I asked these food pantry representatives to stand up if they would describe the increase they were experiencing as dramatic, everyone in the room stood.

Direct service programs in our area are reporting 30% growth in need in 2008 over 2007. Our food bank experienced a parallel increase in distribution over the same time period. The good news is 1) that the nonprofit hunger relief programs we partner with are turning toward the food bank to keep up with the growth they are experiencing, and 2) that we are able to meet it. The partnership between food banks and the more than 1500 nonprofit programs across WI that receive food from us is strong because we are able to provide food to them cost effectively and efficiently.

Fair and equitable distribution of food is an important value to Feeding America food banks. A statistic that we pay attention to is pounds of food distributed per person in poverty. This is important because it assures that we make special efforts to accommodate rural need. It is easiest

and cheapest to distribute large quantities of food in major metropolitan areas. It is equitable and just to work toward distribution according to need. One way Feed My People addresses the need of underserved communities is to offer free delivery service. This eliminates the barrier of distance that blocks the flow of food from getting to where it is needed most. We know it works because in the first six months after implementing this change, we doubled the distribution of product to communities outside of Eau Claire.

Bonnie touched on hunger as a problem in Wisconsin. I would like to take a moment to talk about why it is a problem that should be addressed.

First, and foremost, food is a basic human need. In a society of abundance, it is unacceptable that anyone would be without food. I quote from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Without adequate food, people cannot lead healthy, active lives. They are not employable. They cannot care for their children, and their children cannot learn to read and write. The right to food cuts across the entire spectrum of human rights."

Addressing hunger is a moral issue, but it is also an economic one. There is a cost to allowing hunger to exist in Wisconsin and it is a cost that affects us all. In a 2007 study titled The Economic Cost of Domestic Hunger, Dr. Larry Brown and his team at the Harvard School of Public Health determined that the cost of hunger in Wisconsin each year is $1.4 billion. That is, hunger costs each citizen an average of $300 annually. The cost of hunger includes the costs of impaired student learning, lower employee productivity, and illness resulting from inadequate nutrition, as well as direct costs associated with hunger relief agencies.

Hunger is a problem in Wisconsin and it is one that should be addressed. Emergency food programs in Wisconsin offer people a safety net that keeps our communities vibrant. Unlike many other states, Wisconsin does not have legislation supporting non-profit food assistance programs. For example, Minnesota budgets $1 million per biennium to provide milk through Feeding America food banks. In these tough economic times, tax check-off legislation that is budget neutral for Wisconsin seems like a reasonable way for the state to address our rapidly growing hunger needs. Thank you for your consideration.

Wisconsin State Legislature
Senate Committee on Health, Health Insurance, Privacy, Property Tax Relief and Revenue

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 24

Robert G. Mohelnitzky, LCSW
President/CEO
Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin

Good Morning, Mr. Chair and members of the committee,

My name is Robert G. Mohelnitzky. I am a licensed clinical social worker in Wisconsin and the President and CEO of Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin. I have over 40 years experience in the Wisconsin nonprofit system and have worked in my current position for eight years.

I am here today to speak in support of Senate Bill 24, a bill to give tax-filing citizens in Wisconsin an opportunity to help their friends and neighbors who do not have enough food to feed themselves or their families.

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(Over)

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Senate Bill 24 gives citizens another opportunity to support this wonderfully efficient system at a time of great need. Each day more families are showing up at community food pantries saying that they never thought that they would be the ones asking for help.

With the approval of Senate Bill 24, you can, without additional tax money, give taxpayers the opportunity to increase the impact of the Second Harvest/Feeding America food bank system on alleviating hunger.

I would remind you that the primary source of the food we recover and distribute comes from unsalable and surplus food in the food industry. It is estimated that 35 to 40 percent of all food produced never gets to the table and most often is headed for the landfill. This is perfectly good food, and it should not be buried in landfills when there are people struggling with hunger. This food is *value that has already been created*. The Second Harvest/Feeding America food bank system needs more dollars to acquire it, store it and safely distribute it through our wonderful and caring community-based volunteers and their nonprofit organizations at the neighborhood level. Every dollar results in five to eight meals for someone in need.