



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 30, 2015

CONTACT: Rep. Barnes

608.266.3756

REP. BARNES TO GOV. WALKER – HELP MILWAUKEE AVOID HUNGER CRISIS

2,700 MILWAUKEE RESIDENTS AFFECTED EACH MONTH BY FAILED SERVICE MODEL

MADISON – Rep. Mandela Barnes (D – Milwaukee) is requesting the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) to request a waiver from time limits for FoodShare recipients in Milwaukee County. Only seven percent of enrollees have gained employment under new requirements in the FoodShare Employment and Training program (FSET), while over fifty percent of the people referred to participate have had their FoodShare cases revoked.

Able-bodied adults without dependent children are required to meet a work requirement by enrolling in employment and worker training programs offered by the state, unless they meet an exemption. If able-bodied adults without dependent children choose not to meet the work requirement through employment or participating in a work program, they will be limited to three months of FoodShare benefits in a 36-month period.

“This holiday season will be devastating over half the people referred to FoodShare Employment & Training in Milwaukee,” said Rep. Barnes. “Only 7% of those referred to the program have found job placements. My constituents need immediate action in order to obtain good paying jobs and put food on their tables, so I call on Gov. Walker’s administration to do the humane thing and request a waiver from these time limits as soon as possible.”

Furthermore, the State of Wisconsin has been placed into corrective action by the Food and Nutrition Service of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The USDA found that ResCare – the for-profit company chosen by DHS to provide employment and training in Milwaukee for people enrolled in FoodShare – violates the American’s with Disabilities Act and the Civil Rights Act by asking individuals if they are mentally ill, drug dependent, or violent with their family, and even condescendingly remark about the dress attire of trainees. Milwaukee residents have repeatedly reported poor treatment, forced and unpaid work experience, and case closure that they don’t understand from the agency.

Each month, roughly 2,700 people in Milwaukee County lose their ability to buy food because of the state’s failed service model. These numbers are likely only to worsen on the heels of cumbersome changes to Wisconsin’s FoodShare program becoming law earlier this month.

“It is time to stop wasting vital public resources in a job training and employment program that is ineffective and discriminatory,” said Rep. Barnes. “Allowing thousands of people that I represent in the greater Milwaukee area to starve is cruel and unnecessary, and we need immediate action to ensure that these families are receiving the resources they need and deserve.”

###