



**TO:** Milwaukee County Finance Committee  
**FROM:** Mark Rakowski, Chief Operations Officer, Children's Community Health Plan, Children's Wisconsin  
**DATE:** Thursday, May 19, 2022  
**RE:** Support for Milwaukee Market Match Program

My name is Mark Rakowski and I'm the chief operations officer at Children's Community Health Plan (CCHP), an affiliate of Children's Wisconsin (Children's). I'm pleased to be sharing perspectives on behalf of a number of departments at Children's. I want to thank the members of the Finance Committee for the opportunity to share our support for the Milwaukee Market Match Program.

Many of you are familiar with Children's, with our top pediatric hospital care, primary care and urgent care offices, CCHP, various community health programs, child well-being services and more. Children's vision is to have all Wisconsin kids be the healthiest in the nation and in striving to achieve this ambitious vision, we recognize that most of the drivers of a child's health and well-being are often reflected in the social, cultural and environmental factors that surround a child and their family. At CCHP, we are committed to the communities we serve and are passionate about meeting our members where they are to ensure they have the education, resources and support needed to live happy and healthy lifestyles.

For several years, CCHP has been involved in efforts to promote healthy eating and fresh food access among our members and Milwaukee residents. These include grants from the City of Milwaukee Fresh Food Access Fund program and supporting various farmers markets with matching funds to incentivize fresh produce purchases. Additionally, Children's Wisconsin's Emergency Department has implemented the Food Insecurity Program to screen families, identify needs, and provide immediate financial support for Children's cafeteria and follow-up connections with food and other community resources.

While many Milwaukee families struggled with food insecurity before the pandemic, we've seen this need exacerbated with more families participating in FoodShare (SNAP) including many who have children. Food insecurity is much more common among households that have low incomes, are headed by a single parent, have limited education levels, or are predominantly Black and Hispanic. In fact, the disparity in food security between Black and White households in Wisconsin is among the largest in the country. While the food insecurity rate in Wisconsin is lower than the national average, rates in Milwaukee County exceed the national average. Supporting families in purchasing more healthy food options through the Milwaukee Market Match Program provides an opportunity to address key health inequities in our community.

Incentive programs, like those offered through the Milwaukee Market Match Program, have been demonstrated to increase participants' consumption of fruits and vegetables. For every dollar that a family spends on healthy food, they get another dollar to spend on more healthy food. We're all familiar with the benefits of a healthy diet – especially for children – to grow, develop, learn and thrive. Healthy meals can reduce risks of obesity, heart disease, diabetes, cancer, stress and mental illness. However, fresh vegetables and fruit are often expensive, putting healthier options out of reach for many. That's

why efforts, like the Milwaukee Market Match Program, are critical to extending families' dollars further to support healthy food purchases.

With the \$1 million investment in the Milwaukee Market Match Program, more farmers markets and more Milwaukee families would benefit for years to come with greater and more equitable access to healthy fruits and vegetables.

I ask for your strong support for an investment the Milwaukee Market Match Program. Thank you for your consideration.

Mark Rakowski

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