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To: Senator Alberta Darling and Representative Robin Vos
Co-Chairs of Joint Finance Committee
Joint Committee on Finance Members

From: Ken Taylor, Executive Director, Wisconsin Council on Children and Families

Re: Paper #355: Income Maintenance Centralization and FoodShare Transfer

The Wisconsin Council on Children and Families has expressed concerns to the Committee regarding the Governor's original proposal to centralize the state's income maintenance programs. After significant improvements to the Administration's proposal, as well as a strong alternative proposal by the Wisconsin County Human Services Association (WCHSA), the Council could support either **Alternative A2 or Alternative B2**. However, we prefer Alternative B2 because it capitalizes on local expertise and doesn't penalize counties who provide a greater local overmatch to better support services to low income families.

The state and county models are similar on many levels, including the total funding level and amount of GPR funding. One significant difference between the two plans is that the state's proposal would cut each county's Community Aids funding (the basic county allocation or BCA) by the amount of the county's local overmatch, and that funding – about \$26.7 million statewide – would be redistributed among all the counties using a formula based on caseloads.

Both models address our primary concerns about a face-to-face presence in every county, administration of all programs in a unified manner by one state agency with local service delivery, and streamlined service delivery without compromised quality. However, both have shortcomings. Many of these are addressed in the Fiscal Bureau alternatives, including a particularly important concern about local overmatch. Counties who are spending more of their own local property tax dollars to better serve low income families in their communities should not be penalized by redistribution of their basic county allocation. For this reason, it is important that the committee adopt the LFB's 2nd alternative in either alternative A or B.

Public assistance programs including Medicaid, BadgerCare, and Food Share are vital to the health and well-being of Wisconsinites. We appreciate the changes made by the administration and the diligent work by WCHSA on their alternative proposal, as well as the further diligence required by both parties and the Legislative Fiscal Bureau in order to present fully developed statutory drafting instructions to the Joint Finance Committee by September 1, 2011.