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Wisconsin joins 16 other states voicing opposition to proposal to essentially eliminate Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

MADISON – Gov. Tony Evers, along with governors from 16 other states, signed and submitted a letter Wednesday voicing opposition to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) proposal to essentially eliminate Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), effectively rendering kids, farmers, and families ineligible for critical food assistance.

Since it was established 55 years ago, SNAP has proven to be one of the most effective anti-hunger programs in the country. The USDA's proposal is expected to affect more than three million people across the United States, and will make it harder for nearly 40,000 people in Wisconsin to make ends meet and put food on their table. The rule not only affects working Wisconsinites, but will also put thousands of Wisconsin's kids in jeopardy of losing access to free and reduced-price meals at school while making it more difficult for working families to provide for healthy food for their kids at home.

"What's best for our kids is what's best for our state. We cannot afford to have nearly 12,000 children in our state go hungry," Gov. Evers said. "We should be making it easier for our kids,

farmers, seniors, people with disabilities, and working families to have access healthy foods, not harder."

Earlier this year, Lt. Gov. Barnes testified in opposition of the rule at a hearing before Congress.

"Broad-based categorical eligibility helps lift families out of poverty: it's helping farmers, caregivers, and factory workers all across our state," Lt. Gov. Barnes said in his testimony. "These individuals are contributing members of our society and taxpayers—but unfortunately, low-wages and high expenses like childcare and rent, are making it hard for them to make ends meet. Broad-based categorical eligibility provides needed relief for these families—and it promotes work. Eliminating it would have dangerous repercussions in our state."

BBCE is a policy that requires states to enroll eligible applicant households in SNAP for food assistance if they're already qualified for other benefits limited to low-income people, most notably benefits funded under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant. States utilize BBCE to adopt less restrictive income and asset tests and to better coordinate SNAP with other state-operated programs, resulting in an increase in low-income households accessing the food assistance they need while also making SNAP easier and less costly for states to administer.