



February 16, 2015

SENATE  
PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE & SAFETY

Exhibit No. 5

Date 2/16/2015

Bill No. SB 206

To the Esteemed Members of the Committee:

This written comment regards Senate Bill 206. Missoula Food Bank is a private non-profit organization that provides emergency food assistance to one in seven people living in Missoula County, and to others in the adjacent counties of Western Montana. In 2014, our organization provided more than 98,000 services to Montanans struggling with food insecurity.

The board and staff of Missoula Food Bank strongly urge the committee to vote against Senate Bill 206. This bill proposes dangerous and oppressive changes to the way Montana manages the SNAP program in our state; changes that will further widen the food security gap for our neighbors.

When considering this bill, we ask you to remember people in our state who are struggling to access even the most basic of necessities. Food is a universal need, and all Montanans deserve access to adequate, nutritious foods.

Consider Beverly. Beverly is an aging widow who we came to know as a client of Missoula Food Bank. She is a proud and resourceful woman who works hard to age in place. She owns a mobile home, and scrapes by with lot rent and other necessities using her Social Security benefits. Beverly is diabetic and has other stomach-related issues that restrict her diet significantly. Since Missoula Food Bank assisted Beverly in applying for SNAP benefits, she is no longer in a situation of needing to access emergency food assistance regularly to be healthy and age in place.

Under Senate Bill 206, the food Beverly needs to stay healthy would not be available to her using the SNAP program. Instead she would be restricted to only those foods allowable by the WIC program. WIC, as you know, is specifically intended to supplement the nutritional needs of prenatal women and infants – two very important, but very different, at-risk populations.

Under Senate Bill 206. Beverly would likely not qualify for SNAP any longer, though it is a vital support in keeping her healthy and aging in her own home. This bill seeks to limit Montana's ability to

administer the SNAP program with federally allowable eligibility expansion. In the past, Beverly's mobile home would be considered a resource under eligibility guidelines, making it more difficult for her to qualify for needed monthly benefits. Senate Bill 206 would reinstate these resource limits. This bill aims to disallow our state to continue administering the program as it best fits and serves those in need in Montana.

Of additional concern are provisions in this bill to require photo ID to use an EBT card and the proposal to revoke our State's ability to apply for waivers for access extension for able bodied adults without dependents.

Please consider that this bill will increase the administrative costs of the SNAP program, and will not reduce the number of people in our state in need of nutrition assistance. SNAP works. For every dollar of SNAP that comes into a community, \$1.73 recirculates into our local economies. SNAP keeps nutritious food on the tables of our seniors, working families, those with disabilities and others in our state who are on their individual paths to self-sufficiency.

Again, we urge the committee to oppose Senate Bill 206 for the health and wellbeing of Montanans.

Sincerely,



Aaron Brock  
Executive Director

***Missoula Food Bank provides emergency food assistance to people and strives to reduce hunger.***