Please Support Assembly Bill 215 – The Nutrition Education Act

MAIN MESSAGE:
Numerous studies have shown that eating habits are established early in the life and tend to carry through to adulthood. When combined with access to nutritious foods in schools and at home, evidence-based nutrition education encourages healthy eating habits in children and improves child health outcomes. The Legislature should support the Nutrition Education Act to improve nutrition education in Wisconsin classrooms. The proposal would simply update the state’s nutrition education standards and incorporate a nutrition component into health education.

BACKGROUND:
Current law requires Wisconsin schools meet certain educational goals and expectations established by the state. In addition to academic skills, public schools must offer an instructional program to provide students with knowledge and means to maintain lifelong health, including information on the value of nutritious foods. Current law also requires Wisconsin students to complete at least a half credit in health education to graduate from high school.

The Nutrition Education Act includes the following provisions that would improve nutrition education in Wisconsin:

Update the state’s nutrition education standards to include instruction on the nutritive value of foods, as outlined in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, and the importance of a nutritious diet in promoting health, preventing chronic disease, and maintaining a healthy weight. The Dietary Guidelines were created in 1990 and are updated every five years to include the most recent scientific findings pertaining to diet and nutrition.

Incorporate a nutrition education component into the health education credit that is currently required for graduation from high school.

KEY POINTS:
- Nutrition education is an evidence-based, cost effective way to improve health outcomes and foster healthy eating habits for a lifetime. Other Midwestern states that have nutrition education requirements include Illinois, Iowa and Ohio.
- According to the Journal of American Medical Association, childhood obesity is epidemic in the U.S. with more than one third of children overweight or obese in 2012.
- The costs of obesity are significant, accounting for $147 billion in national health care costs in 2008, approximately 9% of the national health care budget (Institute of Medicine).
- Schools are in a unique position to promote healthy eating and effective nutrition education can lead to greater academic success for students and benefit them far beyond the classroom.
- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Wisconsin is one of twenty-five states that has an adult obesity rate of 30% or higher.

LEGISLATIVE REQUEST:
SNA-WI and WAND asks the Legislature to support the Nutrition Education Act. The legislation would improve nutrition education standards and help students make healthier choices to improve academic performance, promote optimal growth and development and reduce the risk of developing chronic diseases.

CONTACT:
For more information, please do not hesitate to contact SNA-WI and WAND’s government affairs consultants Dan Carpenter, Erik Kanter, or Tim Hoven at 608-310-8832.