

# FMI State Issues Report

December 11, 2014

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### **USDA has “Significant Concerns” over New SNAP Photo ID Law in MA, ME**

Earlier this week, the *Boston Globe* [reported](#) that USDA dispatched agents to Massachusetts in August to investigate concerns on the implementation of a new state law regarding photos on SNAP EBT cards. On December 2, USDA sent a follow up letter to Massachusetts state agency staff on the findings of these concerns.

Specifically, USDA has “significant concerns” dealing with program access, staff communications and training, and also retailer communications and training from the state. In the letter, USDA specifies corrective actions that must be taken.

Regarding retailers, FNS is concerned that state agency *at all levels* believe that retailers must check the card at the POS to ensure the purchaser is the person pictured on the card. This puts Massachusetts in violation of the *Food and Nutrition Act*. In the letter, USDA directs the state to communicate to retailers that anyone authorized to use the card may use the card without having to submit to additional verification of identity, as use of the unique PIN associated with each card is sufficient verification of identity. Therefore, **all household members and authorized representatives not pictured on the card can continue to access benefits**. View USDA’s letter [here](#).

The Massachusetts Food Association has informed their members from the inception of this law that nothing has changed with regard to accepting EBT photo ID cards; stores cannot and should not be asking to see the card if the customer knows the PIN and enters it correctly.

In November, USDA sent a similar letter to Maine, which has also implemented a photo requirement on the SNAP card. [Here](#) is the Maine letter. In addition, the Maine Grocers and Food Producers Association reports that the Governor of Maine is expected to continue his efforts to reform Mainers’ generational dependency on “welfare” programs. A bill will likely include a sales prohibition on taxable foods items such as candy and soda under SNAP. There is keen interest amongst lawmakers as well to reduce a SNAP recipient’s ability to “spend” tax payer’s money on these types of foods.

### **Wisconsin Could See SNAP Photo ID, Food Choice Bill**

With their Republican trifecta held in check in November, Wisconsin leadership has put together an agenda that holds many conservative reforms, including SNAP. In their agenda, Assembly Republicans have said they will pursue placing a photo ID on all EBT cards and they will work to ensure that if someone receives assistance to purchase food, “a significant portion of that food is nutritious.” In addition, they will work to put a “reasonable limit” on the number of replacement cards someone can receive; screen for substance abuse; send all public assistance recipients an annual statement of benefits; which, they say, is a tangible and streamlined way of knowing how much help they received and from which programs. [Here](#) is a copy of the agenda.

### **FINI Grants for SNAP Incentives**

As previously reported to you in FMI *State Issues Report*, the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) Grant Program is requesting applications by December 15 to support projects to increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables among SNAP recipients by providing incentives at the point of purchase. Read more [here](#).

### **Recently Updated USDA Retailer Guidance on TPP Options for SNAP**

As previously reported to you by FMI, all SNAP-authorized retailers, with some exceptions, must pay for their own EBT equipment and services and should arrange for lease or purchase of EBT equipment and services, in order to ensure future participation in SNAP. USDA has just updated their list of Third Party Processor options for retailers who may not know where to obtain EBT equipment and services. [Here](#) is the USDA Guidance to Retailers.

### **FMI State Retreat is Scheduled**

The 2015 FMI State Issues Retreat is scheduled for August 3-5 (Monday-Wednesday). The meeting will take place in Annapolis, Maryland; home of the nation’s first statehouse.

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