

Letter 7 with response

From: [Buchholz, Timothy](#)
To: [ETF SMB Board Feedback](#)
Subject: Healthier Balance Rebate Program
Date: Thursday, January 21, 2021 12:26:01 PM

Hello,

I was very disappointed to find out today that my state health plan provider is no longer offering the Healthier Balance Rebate program. My wife and I have both taken advantage of this program for a few years now since we first found out about it. We have used it in some years to justify the cost of a gym membership and last year to help offset the cost of signing up for a local CSA, which we loved, but would not have likely done without this financial incentive to help cover some of that expense. We ate healthier last year than we ever have before thanks to that CSA membership that was partly paid for by the Healthier Balance Rebate program.

I have not doubt there are numerous others across the state in similar situations where the health rebate program was encouraging people to live healthier, but who might not do so without financial incentive/help. I hope you will consider re-instating this program soon. It has helped us be able to afford to make our lives healthier over the past 4-5 years.

Sincerely,

Tim Buchholz

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Dr. Timothy Buchholz
Associate Professor of Music
UW-Stevens Point

Hello Dr. Buchholz,

Thank you for reaching out to the Department of Employee Trust Funds (ETF). We appreciate hearing from you and for the opportunity to provide you additional information regarding the elimination of the Healthy Balance Rebate program offered through your health plan under the State of Wisconsin Group Health Insurance Program (GHIP). Your correspondence and ETF's response will be shared with the Board for review and consideration during future benefit decisions.

The Group Insurance Board (Board) approved this change last year to help alleviate risk of tax error and ensure consistency of benefits in the GHIP. The health plans that were offering wellness incentives beyond those included in the standard offering through Well Wisconsin ended these incentives at the Board's request due to increasing risk of non-compliance with Internal Revenue Service Code 213 (d), for incentives that do not qualify as a medical expense, and potential tax liabilities for the plan and its members. While we understand the benefit of the Healthy Balance Rebate program, this program, and others similar to it were causing a number of tax liability problems for members, which outweighed the overall benefit of the program.

Thank you for your commitment to health and well-being by staying active and eating nutritiously. While no longer having this incentive through your health plan may be discouraging, we hope you continue your wellness journey. Consider utilizing the resources via the Well Wisconsin program administered by WebMD, which can be found at <https://webmdhealth.com/wellwisconsin>. There, you will find fitness videos, recipes and more. And, if you choose, you may use the Well Wisconsin earned incentive \$150 gift card to offset the cost of your fitness membership or CSA. ETF has been and will continue to develop new health and wellness options that we hope will supplement your and all our members' health.

Thank you, again, for reaching out to ETF and the Board regarding your concerns. I hope that I have been able to answer your question. However, if you have additional questions or concerns, please reach out to me at Molly.Heisterkamp@etf.wi.gov or via phone at (608) 267-3939.

Sincerely,

Molly Heisterkamp, Disease Management and Wellness Program Manager
Office of Strategic Health Policy
Department of Employee Trust Funds

CC: Brian Stamm, Deputy Director, Office of Strategic Health Policy
Group Insurance Board members