

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 6053

As Reported by House Committee On:
Health Care & Wellness

Title: An act relating to providing personal hygiene and cleaning products to low-income people.

Brief Description: Establishing a pilot program to provide access to personal hygiene and cleaning products.

Sponsors: Senators Fraser and Keiser.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Health Care & Wellness: 3/20/09, 3/26/09 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development to conduct a pilot project to evaluate the feasibility of providing personal hygiene and cleaning products to people in need, using volunteer-based organizations.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE & WELLNESS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Cody, Chair; Driscoll, Vice Chair; Campbell, Clibborn, Green, Kelley, Moeller, Morrell and Pedersen.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Ericksen, Ranking Minority Member; Bailey, Herrera and Hinkle.

Staff: Chris Cordes (786-7103)

Background:

Several programs in Washington provide food assistance to low-income persons.

Basic Food Program.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly known as the Food Stamp Program) is a federal program enabling low-income families to purchase eligible food at authorized retail food stores primarily through the use of electronic benefit cards. The U.S. Department of Agriculture administers the program at the federal level, and state agencies administer the program at the state and local levels, including determination of eligibility. In Washington, the program is called the Basic Food Program, and includes an additional state-funded component.

Eligibility for the Basic Food Program is based on both income and other factors. A household may be eligible regardless of eligibility for other state assistance. To meet the gross income eligibility test, the applicant's household income may not exceed 130 percent of the federal poverty guidelines (as of September 1, 2008, \$1,907 per month for a household of three).

Emergency Food Assistance Program.

Federal Program. The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) is a federal program that helps supplement food for low-income persons by making commodity foods available to state distributing agencies based on the number of unemployed and low-income persons in the state. The states provide the food to local agencies, usually food banks, for distribution to local agencies that directly serve the public.

In Washington, the state distributing agency for TEFAP is the Department of General Administration. Under TEFAP, clients must meet household income standards by providing an annual self-declaration. A client's household income may not exceed 185 percent of the federal poverty guidelines (as of April 1, 2008, \$2,714 per month for a household of three).

State Program. The Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (DCTED) administers a state-funded Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP). The program allows up to 10 percent of the EFAP funds to be used to provide essential nonfood items, such as cleaning or personal hygiene products. To be eligible for EFAP assistance, a client must be unable to purchase enough food for his or her subsistence.

In 2008 the EFAP budget of approximately \$4.5 million leveraged about \$197 million in matching in-kind and cash contributions. This provided funding for 320 food banks and distribution centers (funding staff, operational expenses, equipment, and food), and 32 tribal food voucher programs. In 2008 about 1.25 million clients were served through the programs, and over 97 million pounds of food were distributed.

Summary of Bill:

Personal Hygiene and Cleaning Product Pilot Project.

The DCTED must conduct a pilot project to evaluate the feasibility of providing personal hygiene and cleaning products to people in need, using volunteer-based organizations.

In conducting the pilot project, the DCTED must:

- identify qualifying products;
- adopt eligibility standards similar to those for the Basic Food Program;
- choose at least two pilot sites, at least one on each side of the Cascade Mountains, with consideration given to whether the community has organizations capable of coordinating volunteers, identifying clients, and recruiting donations; and
- provide funding to participating organizations for volunteer coordination, outreach, and product purchase and transport.

The DCTED must evaluate the pilot, considering:

- the cost to establish and administer the programs;
- the need for products and services by low-income persons and families in financial distress; and
- opportunities and barriers to expansion.

By December 1, 2010, the DCTED must report to the Legislature and the Office of Financial Management on the pilot project and the potential for expanding the program to other communities.

Pilot Program Funding.

Two appropriations, totaling \$45,000, are made from the State General Fund to the DCTED for purposes of the pilot program.

Appropriation: The sum of \$45,000 is appropriated from the State General Fund to the DCTED.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) There is a big need for cleaning and personal hygiene products, which are only available at food banks on a hit-or-miss basis and cannot be purchased with food stamps. The economic situation makes the need for these products even greater. While hunger can be hidden during a job interview, cleanliness cannot. For people who experience sudden unemployment, the non-food banks are a great help with these additional items. There is an important relationship between cleanliness and health, especially with regard to childhood illnesses. A pilot project could determine the magnitude of the need and whether entities other than food banks could be used. A pilot project could help to better connect these other entities.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Fraser, prime sponsor; Joan Cathey, Young Women's Christian Association; Donna Crabbe; and Teresa Tracy.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.