
SENATE BILL 5252

State of Washington

55th Legislature

1997 Regular Session

By Senators Fairley, McAuliffe, Wojahn, Prentice, Franklin, Jacobsen, Kohl, Heavey, Brown, Snyder, Patterson, Bauer, Fraser, Hargrove, Sheldon, Thibaudeau and Winsley

Read first time 01/21/97. Referred to Committee on Health & Long-Term Care.

1 AN ACT Relating to a food assistance program for legal immigrants;
2 adding a new section to chapter 74.04 RCW; and creating a new section.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature recognizes that the United
5 States of America is a country of immigrants. Many families who
6 immigrate to Washington state from another country are seeking a chance
7 to make a better life for themselves and for their families. They come
8 to America for economic opportunity and freedom from oppression, as did
9 the ancestors of those of us fortunate enough to be born as American
10 citizens. Legal immigrants contribute to our society and community,
11 both economically and by cultural enrichment. Legal immigrants have
12 "played by the rules," residing in the United States legally, paying
13 taxes, serving in the armed forces, and making themselves subject to
14 the laws of this country.

15 The legislature finds that some immigrant families have not yet
16 been able to raise themselves above the level of poverty. These
17 families may include those with elderly persons and small children.
18 Food assistance in the form of food stamps is necessary for the
19 preservation of life and health.

1 The legislature notes that the federal government has enacted
2 legislation that results in the denial of food stamps to some legal
3 immigrants. In the interests of humanity, and in recognition of the
4 intrinsic worth of all persons residing in Washington state, the
5 legislature finds that those legal immigrants losing federal food stamp
6 entitlement should be provided with state subsidized food assistance.

7 Finally, the legislature finds that the intent and requirements of
8 international law, including the international human rights norms and
9 certain United States treaty obligations, require the nondiscriminatory
10 treatment of immigrants, especially with regard to the protection of
11 family life by international covenant. The requirements of
12 international law include the equitable treatment of legal immigrants
13 in the provision of food assistance for the poor.

14 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 74.04 RCW
15 to read as follows:

16 (1) The department may establish a food assistance program for
17 persons whose immigrant status meets the eligibility requirements of
18 the federal food stamp program as of August 21, 1996, but who are no
19 longer eligible solely due to their immigrant status under the personal
20 responsibility and work opportunity reconciliation act of 1996, P.L.
21 104-193.

22 (2) The rules for the state food assistance program shall follow
23 exactly the rules of the federal food stamp program as they existed on
24 the effective date of this section except for the provisions pertaining
25 to immigrant status under P.L. 104-193.

26 (3) The benefit under the state food assistance program shall be
27 the same as the benefit amount under the federal food stamp program had
28 the person met the eligibility requirements pertaining to immigrant
29 status of P.L. 104-193.

30 (4) The department may enter into a contract with the United States
31 department of agriculture to use the existing federal food stamp
32 program coupon system for the purposes of administering the state food
33 assistance program.

34 (5) In the event the department is unable to enter into a contract
35 with the United States department of agriculture, the department is

1 authorized to issue vouchers to eligible households for the purchase of
2 eligible foods at participating retailers.

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