

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESB 6411

As Passed Senate, March 4, 2004

Title: An act relating to reducing hunger.

Brief Description: Reducing hunger.

Sponsors: Senators Brandland, Rasmussen, Sheahan, Hargrove, Swecker, Brown, Jacobsen, McAuliffe, Regala, Eide, Kline, Kohl-Welles and Winsley.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Children & Family Services & Corrections: 1/30/04, 2/4/04 [DPS].
Ways & Means: 2/23/04 [DPS (CFC)].
Passed Senate: 3/4/04, 44-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6411 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Stevens, Chair; Parlette, Vice Chair; Carlson, Deccio, Hargrove, McAuliffe and Regala.

Staff: Fara Daun (786-7459)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6411 as recommended by Committee on Children & Family Services & Corrections be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Zarelli, Chair; Hewitt, Vice Chair; Parlette, Vice Chair; Carlson, Doumit, Fairley, Fraser, Hale, Honeyford, Johnson, Pflug, Prentice, Rasmussen, Regala, Roach, B. Sheldon and Winsley.

Staff: Kirstan Arestad (786-7708)

Background: Food insecurity describes a household where finances are short enough that the household members are not sure that no household members will go hungry. Food insecurity with hunger describes households in which the finances are such that at least one family member does go hungry at times because there is not enough money for food.

According to the USDA *Household Food Security* report, which measures food insecurity and food insecurity with hunger, Washington State is the fifth most "hungry" state and 14th in food insecurity. The states in the top four are Oklahoma, Oregon, Utah, Mississippi, and Arizona is tied with Washington for fifth place. Washington has been in the top five states for hunger since the federal government began tracking the information in 1996. Washington's rate of hunger has dropped from a high of 5 percent in 2000 to 4.4 percent in 2002 but all Washington

rates are at least above the national average. While Washington's food insecurity ranking is lower, approximately 40 percent of Washington food insecure families are also hungry. This compares to a 30 percent national average and a 32 percent average for the western states.

Washington has a food stamp program that provides a valuable source of food for qualifying food insecure families.

Some persons do not qualify for food stamps because of a post 1996 felony drug conviction. This ban does not apply to other felonies. Federal law now provides states the opportunity for states to lift the lifetime ban on food stamp eligibility for persons with felony drug convictions.

Summary of Bill: School districts with schools serving grades kindergarten through four where 25 percent of the students qualify for free or reduced price lunches must implement a school lunch program. Applications must be sent to the families to determine whether 25 percent of the students qualify. School lunch programs implemented under this section must be implemented for the 2005-2006 school year.

School districts that have schools with summer academic, enrichment, or remedial programs where 50 percent of the students qualify for free or reduced price lunches must implement a summer food service program that is open to area children unless there is a compelling reason not to open the program. For schools with existing school lunch programs, summer food service programs must be implemented in summer 2005; for other schools, they must be implemented the summer following the implementation of a school lunch program.

There is a good cause exception to both school food service provisions.

To the maximum extent allowable under federal law, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) must implement simplified reporting for food stamps before November 1, 2004. DSHS must also provide, beginning on October 31, 2005, transitional food stamp assistance for a period of five months following the cessation of TANF assistance so long as the family is not on sanction status. If necessary, DSHS must extend the household's food stamp certification until the end of the transition period. With this bill, the state also exercises the federal option for states to opt out of the drug felony eligibility ban.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 26, 2004.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For (Children & Family Services & Corrections): Washington has consistently been in the top five hungriest states in the country as measured by the USDA. Its recent improvement in the ranking reflects the worsening conditions in two other states rather than a significant change in Washington. There is an intent to minimize the fiscal note and amendments are being worked on. Food banks distributed 90 million pounds of food last year. Food banks represent 10 to 15 percent of the food resources of hungry families. Food stamps and child nutrition programs provide the rest. The demand on food banks has risen by 50 percent, and while donations are also rising, they are not rising fast enough to keep up with demand. There are a significant number of schools without a breakfast program or without

either a breakfast or lunch program. Some children's only regular meal comes from school or community food service programs. Neighborhood programs with lunches see substantial increases in attendance during school breaks. Simplified reporting and transitional food stamp programs will assist people in making the transition from TANF to independence. The five-month certification on the transitional grant will help families struggling to return to independence because it will permit them to catch up on bills without worrying that there will not be enough food. While there is a small start up cost, these provisions have been shown to reduce costs over time.

Testimony Against (Children & Family Services & Corrections): None.

Testified (Children & Family Services & Corrections): PRO: Senator Dale Brandland, prime sponsor; Steve Bauch, Northwest Harvest; Bob Cooper, Washington Citizen Action; George Sneller, OSPI; Greg Williamson, OSPI; Linda Stone, Children's Alliance; Elizabeth Schott, Consultant; Mary Kenfield, PTA; Bethany Hays-Parke, WROC; Eve Rickert, Friends Committee on Washington State Public Policy; Kirsten CeCiccio, Friends Committee on Washington State Public Policy; Kristen Rogers, Food Lifeline, National Association of Social Workers, Washington Association of Churches; Edward Lignoux, citizen.

Testimony For (Ways & Means): If people who have committed crimes have paid their debt to society and can't get back on their feet because they can't get their basic needs like food met, then their options are limited and many times it will lead to a life of crime. Food Lifeline has seen an increase in the need of people coming to the food banks of more than 47.5 percent in the last few years (serving 600,000 people vs. 400,000 people). Food banks were supposed to be an emergency resource to catch people when they were in crisis, not a response to chronic hunger, which is what they're turning into. Private charities that make up the emergency food system are at most 15 percent response to hunger. The two biggest answers to hunger is the federal food stamp program and the national school lunch program. This legislation improves the food stamp program. Three provisions will help hungry families in Washington State receive food support and provide economic impetus to local communities. It will simplify the food stamp process and reduce errors which Washington has been sanctioned for in the past. It also provides transitional benefits for five months for families leaving TANF authorized by the U.S. farm bill and allows drug felons to receive food benefits.

Testimony Against (Ways & Means): None.

Testified (Ways & Means): PRO: Senator Dale Brandland, prime sponsor; Kristen Rogers, National Association of Social Workers, Food Lifeline; Kevin Glackin-Coley, Children's Alliance.