
Education Committee

HB 2709

Brief Description: Authorizing school districts to establish a price preference to purchase locally grown food.

Sponsors: Representatives Hurst, Pettigrew, Appleton, Sells, Green, Conway, Morrell, Anderson, Sullivan, Kenney, Schual-Berke, McIntire, Wood, Hudgins, Simpson, Goodman, VanDeWege, Ormsby and Rolfes.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows school districts to establish a 25 percent price preference for the purpose of increasing procurement of locally grown food.

Hearing Date: 2/1/08

Staff: Cece Clynch (786-7195).

Background:

Washington Agriculture Industry

Washington is a major agricultural state with 34,000 farms operating on more than 15 million acres, producing at least 300 commercial crops and livestock products valued at \$6.4 billion. Washington ranks first in the U.S. for production of 11 commodities, including apples, sweet cherries, pears and red raspberries. Growers' production ranks second in the U.S. for an additional eight commodities, including potatoes, grapes, and onions.

School Meal Programs

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) administers the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP). These programs provide low-cost or free meals to students in grades K-12. Participating school districts are given cash subsidies for the meals they serve as long as eligible children receive reduced price or free meals and the meals meet federal nutritional requirements.

Currently, there are 277 public school districts in the state that participate in the NSLP and the SBP. School districts also participate in other feeding programs administered by the USDA, such

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as the Summer Food Service Program, the Special Milk Program, and the Seamless Summer Feeding Program.

The USDA rules which govern these entitlement programs specifically prohibit the use of statutorily or administratively imposed in-state or local geographic preferences in the procurement process.

Summary of Bill:

School districts may establish a percentage price preference of up to 25 percent for the purpose of increasing procurement of locally grown food. "Locally grown food" includes food and drink which is planted, cultivated, harvested, raised, or collected within Washington or within the Pacific Northwest Economic Region (PNWER). The PNWER is a U.S.-Canadian forum dedicated to increasing global competitiveness and includes northwestern states and western provinces.

"Percentage price preference" means the percent by which a responsive bid from a responsible bidder whose product is a locally grown food may exceed the lowest responsive bid submitted by a responsible bidder whose product is not a locally grown food.

The bill specifically provides that it does not apply to procurement of food by a school if it is determined that compliance with this subsection would cause denial of federal monies or be inconsistent with federal law.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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