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**SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 1685**

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**State of Washington 64th Legislature 2015 Regular Session**

**By** House Agriculture & Natural Resources (originally sponsored by Representatives Gregerson, Hudgins, McBride, Peterson, Bergquist, Ortiz-Self, Tarleton, Orwall, Robinson, Farrell, Riccelli, Fitzgibbon, Walkinshaw, Senn, Lytton, Appleton, Ryu, Tharinger, Moscoso, Ormsby, Fey, and Jinkins)

AN ACT Relating to the establishment of a Washington food policy forum; creating new sections; and providing an expiration date.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The legislature finds that:

(a) Numerous governmental agencies, state programs, and private entities share goals and missions relating to food, nutrition, agriculture, health, education, and economic development through sustained agricultural production and improved access to nutritious foods;

(b) The food and agriculture industry generates forty-nine billion dollars annually, employs one hundred sixty thousand people, and contributes thirteen percent to the state's economy;

(c) Agriculture is a leading employer in the state, produces over three hundred different crops, and is composed of many diverse types of agricultural endeavors;

(d) The state of Washington continues to lose farmland every year to nonfarming uses;

(e) Washington is ranked with the bottom half of states for very low food security;

(f) According to data average for the years 2004 through 2008, nearly sixty-one percent of Washington adults are either obese or overweight;

(g) Obesity contributes substantially to the burden of preventable illnesses and premature death, which are estimated to cost Washington almost two billion dollars annually;

(h) There is a known link between food insecurity and housing insecurity;

(i) The state's food system is the network of people and activities connecting growing and harvesting, processing, distribution, consumption, and residue utilization, as well as associated government and nongovernment institutions, regulations, and programs.

(j) The current food system in the state of Washington is complex and directly affected by the activities and policies of multiple nongovernmental organizations, state agencies, and local governments, and a coordinated, systemic approach is necessary to improve the health of Washington's citizens and improve the economic viability of agriculture; and

(k) The work done by the regional food policy councils in the state can serve as a model for statewide efforts to bring together community, government, business, and agricultural interests to work on integrated and sustainable policy recommendations to strengthen the regional food system that works towards a thriving, inclusive, and just local and regional food system that enhances the health of people, diverse communities, economies, and environments.

(2) The legislature recognizes the need to understand the impacts of governmental rules and regulations on the viability of the agricultural sector and on the ability of citizens of all backgrounds to obtain sufficient, high quality foods for themselves and their families.

(3) The purpose of this act is to provide for the establishment of a forum whereby state food policy, food-related programs, and food-related issues can be examined, improved, and better integrated to accomplish the overarching public goals. It is the intent of the legislature to place the state in a favorable position to qualify for available federal funds, moneys from foundations, and other sources to fund the activities of the forum.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The Washington food policy forum is established as a public-private partnership. The purpose of the forum is to develop recommendations to advance the following food system goals:

(a) To increase production, sales, and consumption of Washington‑grown foods;

(b) To develop and promote programs that bring healthy Washington grown foods to Washington residents, including increased state purchasing of local food products for schools, adult care programs, and other state-funded food programs;

(c) To review and develop programs that support providing proper nutrition and avoid burdens of obesity and chronic diet‑related diseases;

(d) To protect the land and water resources needed for sustained local food production;

(e) To examine ways to encourage retention of an adequate number of farmers, the educational needs for an adequate agricultural workforce, and to provide for the continued economic viability of local food production, processing, and distribution in the state; and

(f) To reduce food insecurity and hunger in the state and ensure that the health and societal benefits of a healthy Washington food system that provides access to nutritionally dense foods are shared with families at all income levels, and particularly with vulnerable children, the elderly, people with disabilities, and communities of color.

(2) Recommendations of the food policy forum must consider, but not be limited to, ways in which the following may help achieve each of the six goals identified under subsection (1) of this section:

(a) Increased collaboration and communication between local, state, and federal governments and agencies;

(b) Innovative public-private partnerships that can leverage private and public market influence, such as through institutional purchasing and contracts;

(c) Improvements to state or federal laws or regulations relevant to the food system and food security in the state;

(d) Improvements in state or federal program implementation relevant to the food system and food security in the state; and

(e) Identification of additional federal, state, local, and private investments needed to accomplish the recommendations.

(3) In developing its recommendations, the food policy forum:

(a) Shall coordinate with the office of farmland preservation to avoid duplication of effort;

(b) Shall solicit public input through public hearings or informational sessions;

(c) May conduct research and analysis as needed within financial resources available to the forum;

(d) May form an advisory committee or committees to address issues identified by the forum as requiring additional study or particular expertise; and

(e) Shall coordinate with, and build on the processes already undertaken by the Washington state food system roundtable initiated by executive order No. 10-02.

(4) The director of the state conservation commission is responsible for appointing participating members of the food policy forum. In making appointments, the director of the state conservation commission must attempt to ensure a diversity of knowledge, experience, and perspectives by building on the representation established by the food system roundtable initiated by executive order No. 10-02 and from sources such as:

(a) State and federal government employees, including academia;

(b) Related nonprofit and community organizations; and

(c) The food industry, including food production, processing, distribution, marketing, and retail sales.

(5) A majority of the participating members appointed by the director of the state conservation commission must appoint an administrative chair for the forum.

(6) In addition to members appointed by the director of the state conservation commission, four legislators may serve on the food policy forum in an ex officio capacity. Legislative participants must be appointed as follows:

(a) The speaker of the house of representatives shall appoint one member from each of the two largest caucuses of the house of representatives; and

(b) The president of the senate shall appoint one member from each of the two largest caucuses of the senate.

(7) Each member of the food policy forum shall serve without compensation but may be reimbursed for travel expenses as authorized in RCW 43.03.050 and 43.03.060.

(8) Staff for the food policy forum must be provided by the state conservation commission. The state conservation commission is responsible for transmitting the recommendations of the food policy forum to the legislature. All recommendations of the food policy forum must be transmitted to the legislature by the state conservation commission, consistent with RCW 43.01.036, by October 31, 2016. The recommendations may include considerations for continuation of the food policy forum beyond the expiration date of this section and any changes to the mission, charge, or structure of the food policy forum should it continue beyond the expiration date.

(9) This section expires July 1, 2017.

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