

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5776

As of February 22, 2016

Title: An act relating to food stamp work requirements.

Brief Description: Concerning food stamp work requirements.

Sponsors: Senators Braun, Baumgartner, Rivers, Becker, Padden, Schoesler, Brown, Angel, Bailey, Benton and Honeyford.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services, Mental Health & Housing: 2/22/16.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, MENTAL HEALTH & HOUSING

Staff: Alison Mendiola (786-7444)

Background: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). SNAP 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 the state agencies administer the program at the state and local levels, including determination of eligibility and allotments, and distribution of benefits. In Washington, SNAP is called the Basic Food Program.

Able-bodied Adult without Dependents (ABAWD). ABAWD may receive SNAP benefits provided they meet the work requirements, which is to work an average of 20 hours per week. The work requirement may be fulfilled by participating in specific employment training programs or by volunteering. If ABAWDs do not meet the work requirements there is a time limit for SNAP benefits, which is three months in three years.

There are exemptions from time limits which include:

- being under 18 or over 49;
- being physically or mentally unable to work;
- receiving certain benefits; chronically homeless;
- caring for a person who is incapacitated;
- receiving food benefits in the same unit as a child;
- applying for or receiving unemployment benefits;
- being an eligible student at least half time; participating in a chemical dependency treatment and rehabilitation program; or

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- being eligible for one of the annual federally-approved exemption slots under the 15 percent rule.

Federal waivers. States may apply for a federal waiver from the work requirements for the entire state or a portion of the state if the state can demonstrate there are not enough jobs - which can demonstrated a number of ways including the state qualifying for extended unemployment benefits. Since the law went into effect in 1996, Washington has always had a waiver. Washington currently has a waiver for all of the state but three counties: King, Pierce, and Snohomish. There are currently 37 states and U.S. territories with partial or full waivers.

Summary of Bill: The State may not seek, maintain, or accept a Federal waiver from federal food stamp requirements. The State shall terminate any work requirement waivers as of the effective date of this Act.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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