

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1587

As Reported by House Committee On:
Human Services & Early Learning
Appropriations

Title: An act relating to increasing access to fruits and vegetables for individuals with limited incomes.

Brief Description: Increasing access to fruits and vegetables for individuals with limited incomes.

Sponsors: Representatives Riccelli, Entenman, Harris, Stonier, Peterson, Chandler, Gregerson, Thai, Senn, Hudgins, Macri, Lekanoff, Griffey, Steele, Goehner, Wylie, Appleton, Chapman, Lovick, Shewmake, Valdez, Bergquist, Morris, Doglio, Robinson, Tharinger, Goodman, Pollet, Slatter, Ormsby and Frame.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Human Services & Early Learning: 1/30/19, 2/1/19 [DP];

Appropriations: 2/20/19, 2/26/19 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Establishes the Fruit and Vegetable Incentives Program at the Department of Health.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & EARLY LEARNING

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Senn, Chair; Callan, Vice Chair; Frame, Vice Chair; Dent, Ranking Minority Member; Eslick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; McCaslin, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Corry, Goodman, Griffey, Kilduff, Klippert, Lovick and Ortiz-Self.

Staff: Dawn Eychaner (786-7135).

Background:

Food Insecurity Incentives Program.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The Department of Health (DOH) manages the Food Insecurity Incentives Program (FINI). The FINI was funded in 2015 by a \$5.86 million five-year grant from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The USDA FINI grant period ends March 31, 2020.

The FINI incentivizes the purchase of fruits and vegetables by participants in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The FINI consists of three components: Farmers' Market Incentives, Grocery Store Incentives, and Fruit and Vegetable Prescriptions. Farmers' Market Incentives and Grocery Store Incentives provide SNAP participants with matching funds to purchase fruits and vegetables. Fruit and Vegetable Prescriptions are vouchers provided by health care providers to food-insecure patients for the purchase of fruits and vegetables.

The SNAP, also referred to in Washington as Basic Food, provides nutrition assistance to low-income individuals. In Washington, the Department of Social and Health Services administers SNAP benefits.

Generally, a household must have a monthly income at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty guideline in order to qualify for the SNAP. Participating households receive a monthly benefit in the form of electronic debit cards also known as electronic benefit transfer. The SNAP benefits are limited to the purchase of food items for use at home as well as seeds and plants to produce food.

Women, Infant, and Children Farmers' Market Nutrition Program.

The federal Women, Infant, and Children (WIC) Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) provides fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables to participants. Women who are pregnant, breastfeeding, or post-partum and children ages 1 to 5 years are eligible to participate in the WIC FMNP. In Washington, the WIC FMNP is administered by the DOH. Each eligible client receives a \$20 benefit for the summer season for the purchase of fruits and vegetables at an authorized farmers market.

Summary of Bill:

Fruit and Vegetable Incentives Program.

The Fruit and Vegetable Incentives Program (FVIP) is created and is administered by the DOH. The FVIP consists of the following three components, subject to funds appropriated:

1. Farmers' Market Basic Food Incentives: additional funds that may be used by a recipient of Basic Food benefits to purchase fruits and vegetables at a farmers market authorized by the DOH.

When authorizing farmers markets, the DOH may give preference to a farmers market that accepts or has previously accepted SNAP program benefits, has the capacity to accept SNAP benefits, or is located in a county with a high level of food insecurity.

2. Grocery Store Basic Food Incentives: additional funds that may be used by a recipient of Basic Food benefits to purchase fruits and vegetables at a grocery store approved by the DOH.

When approving a participating grocery store, the DOH may give preference to a store located in a county with a high level of food insecurity.

3. Fruit and Vegetable Vouchers: cash-value vouchers that may be distributed by a health professional to a patient who is eligible for Basic Food and has a qualifying health condition, as defined by the DOH, or who is food insecure. The vouchers may be redeemed at a participating retailer, including an authorized farmers market or grocery store.

The DOH must approve participating health care systems and may give preference to systems that have operated fruit and vegetable prescription programs, routinely screen patients for food insecurity, have a high percentage of Medicaid clients, or are located in a county with a high level of food insecurity.

Food insecurity is defined as a state in which consistent access to adequate food is limited by a lack of money and other resources at times during the year.

The DOH must collaborate with other state agencies, provide technical assistance and coordination to program partners, and adopt rules to implement the program.

The DOH must evaluate the FVIP for effectiveness and submit a progress report to the Governor and the Legislature by July 1, 2021. When evaluating the FVIP, the DOH must collect information related to fruit and vegetable consumption by participants, levels of food security, and likely impacts on public health outcomes resulting from the FVIP. The progress report must include a description of results of the program and recommend any legislative or programmatic changes to improve the effectiveness of program delivery. A complete program evaluation is due December 1, 2023.

Women, Infant, and Children Farmers' Market Nutrition Program.

Subject to available funds, the DOH must distribute a fruit and vegetable benefit of at least \$30 per summer farmers market season to each eligible participant in the WIC FMNP. To the extent that federal funds are available, federal funds must be used to pay for the benefit.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Preliminary fiscal note available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) People do not have adequate access to fresh fruits and vegetables in food deserts where people want to get healthy food. The FVIP will work with private partners and farmers market vendors and benefit both. The component of the bill that provides fruit and vegetable vouchers will provide a focus on wellness. The opportunity to create a fruit and vegetable program will sustain an effort that began previously to make nutritious food available to families struggling with food insecurity. Food insecurity and poor diet quality are interrelated and affect child health, development, and growth as well as increasing risks for poor health outcomes. Safeway serves more SNAP customers than any other grocery store and is the sole grocer in many communities and rural towns. After one year the in-store incentive program at Safeway has shown an increase in the percent of healthy foods purchased by participants. One in eight Washingtonians rely on the SNAP, but the benefits are limited and have to be budgeted out carefully. Most SNAP participants report their benefits last about three weeks, and food banks then fill the gap. Struggling families often go an entire week with bare cupboards. In Washington 44 percent of babies are served by the WIC, and they receive only about \$8 a month for fruits and vegetables. The Fresh Bucks matching programs are important for participants at farmers markets and create a sense of community belonging. The program gives farms meaningful financial boosts through the growing season. Only about 20 percent of a person's wellness is determined by health care, and 80 percent is determined by social, emotional, and environmental factors. The SNAP participants are spending these incentive dollars on healthy foods and continue to eat healthier after the incentive program ends. Seventy percent of participants in the pilot project report managing their health conditions better.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Riccelli, prime sponsor; Bridget Igoe, City of Seattle Office of Sustainability and Environment; Sara Osborne, Safeway Foundation; Christina Wong, Northwest Harvest; Stacy Carkonen, Tacoma Farmers Market; Sarah Wandler, Seattle Children's Odessa Brown Children's Clinic; and Victor Colman, Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition, and the American Heart Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: Jan Gee, Washington Food Industry Association; and Pama Joyner, Department of Health.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 31 members: Representatives Ormsby, Chair; Bergquist, 2nd Vice Chair; Robinson, 1st Vice Chair; MacEwen, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Rude, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Caldier, Cody, Dolan, Dye, Fitzgibbon, Hansen, Hoff, Hudgins, Jinkins, Kraft, Macri, Mosbrucker, Pettigrew, Pollet, Ryu, Schmick, Senn, Springer, Stanford, Steele, Sullivan, Sutherland, Tarleton, Tharinger, Volz and Ybarra.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Stokesbary, Ranking Minority Member; Chandler.

Staff: Linda Merelle (786-7092).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee On Appropriations Compared to Recommendation of Committee On Human Services & Early Learning:

The Appropriations Committee recommended the removal of the requirement of a \$30 fruit and vegetable benefit to participants in the Women, Infant, and Children (WIC) Farmers' Market Nutrition Program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Supporting healthier eating will reduce public funds spent on preventable illnesses such as diabetes. The grocery store incentive program has led participants increase their produce purchases by 50 percent. The benefits from this program cross multiple sectors, making it a wise investment. Farmers' markets are increasingly seen as an important community hub. Funding provided under this program is critical to shoppers, small, diversified farms, and the community. Something wonderful happens when people are around fruits and vegetables. Those who experience food insecurity are robbed of the access and choices that many people take for granted. One out of eight adults and one out of five children are food insecure. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and WIC programs have proved to be effective in boosting the economy and health. The Food Insecurity Incentives Program (FINI) effectively addresses food insecurities. The United States Congress has permanently funded the FINI at the federal level. This bill would allow more access of those funds. A pilot program for the grocery incentives was limited to Safeway. Under this bill, the program would be expanded to communities with high levels of low-income residents, where there may not be a Safeway.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Victor Colman, Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition and American Heart Association; Jan Gee, Washington Food Industry Association; Stacy Carkonen, Tacoma Farmers Market; and Aaron Czyzewski, Food Lifeline.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.