

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6091

As of January 20, 2020

Title: An act relating to continuing the work of the Washington food policy forum.

Brief Description: Continuing the work of the Washington food policy forum. .

Sponsors: Senators Warnick, Saldaña, Lovelett, Stanford and Wilson, C.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks: 1/16/20.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes the Washington Food Policy Forum as a public-private partnership for developing recommendations to advance certain food system goals.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, WATER, NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

Staff: Karen Epps (786-7424)

Background: The Washington State Conservation Commission (Commission) convened a Food Policy Forum (Forum) in response to a proviso in the 2016 Supplemental Operating Budget. The 2017-19 Biennial Operating Budget included a proviso to the Commission to continue the work of the Forum with the same proviso language from the 2016 Supplemental Operating Budget. The Commission was directed to report to the Legislature with the Forum's recommendations by October 31, 2017. The Forum followed a previous food system roundtable established by Executive Order No. 10-02.

The Forum is composed of members appointed by the director of the Commission (director) and four members from the Legislature. The proviso established that, in making appointments, the director 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 10-02.

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 Commission submitted a report to the Legislature in October 2017 and provided the Legislature with a progress report in February 2019. The Commission submitted recommendations to the Legislature in June 2019. The Forum reached consensus on recommendations related to:

- food insecurity;
- agricultural land protection and availability and next generation farming;
- alleviating barriers to small and medium scale farmers accessing markets;
- infrastructure and rural economic development; and
- impacts of climate change.

In the 2019-21 Biennial Operating Budget, the Legislature directed the Commission to continue convening the Forum and to implement the Forum's recommendations. The Commission and the Department of Agriculture (WSDA) must submit recommendations and a workplan to implement the recommendations to the Legislature and the Governor by June 30, 2021.

Summary of Bill: The Forum is established as a public-private partnership whose purpose is to develop recommendations advancing the following food system goals:

- increasing the availability of Washington-grown foods throughout the state;
- expanding and promoting programs bringing healthy and nutritious Washington-grown foods to state residents;
- examining ways to encourage retention of an adequate number of farmers for small and mid-scale farms;
- reducing food insecurity and hunger in the state; and
- identifying ways to improve coordination and communication among city, county, regional, and state food policy entities.

Recommendations of the Forum must consider ways in which increased collaboration and communication between various government agencies and innovative public-private partnerships may help achieve the goals of the Forum. Recommendations must also consider improvements to laws, regulations, and program implementation helping achieve the goals of the Forum. Recommendations must also consider defining and describing the variety of agriculture in the state utilizing farm acreage, farm business type, crop and agricultural product type, and defining what the term "local" means in the context of food production and distribution, as a way to help achieve the goals of the Forum.

In developing its recommendations, the Forum must coordinate with appropriate local, state, and federal agencies, tribes, and nongovernmental organizations to avoid duplication of effort, and solicit public input through public hearings or informational sessions. The Forum may conduct research and analysis as needed, and form advisory committees to address identified issues.

The director and director of the WSDA must appoint participating members of the Forum by consensus. In making appointments, the directors must attempt to ensure a diversity of knowledge, experience, and perspectives reflecting any issues addressed by the Forum including:

- state and federal government employees, including academia, nonprofit and community organizations; and

- the food industry, including food production, processing, distribution, marketing, and retail sales.

A majority of the participating members appointed by the directors must appoint an administrative chair for the Forum. Four legislators, one from each of the two caucuses of the House of Representatives and the Senate, appointed by the speaker and president respectively, may serve on the Forum in an ex officio capacity. Staff for the Forum must be provided by the Commission and WSDA. The Commission and WSDA are jointly responsible for transmitting the recommendations of the Forum to the Legislature by October 29, 2021.

Appropriation: The bill contains a null and void clause requiring specific funding be provided in an omnibus appropriation act.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 14, 2020.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: Yes.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill establishes a public-private partnership to look at food policy. The Forum brings together a diverse group of entities and has made a lot of progress. This Forum has been instrumental in educating everyone about its recommendations and organizations have made those recommendations their priorities for the session, including feeding hungry people and supporting farmers. The Forum has helped connect the growers and the organizations who provide food to folks in need. The Forum has helped find common ground between the human services issues and the agriculture issues, including finding storage for food at food banks, direct marketing efforts, and looking at ways to get more nutritious food to those in need. The bill establishes a partnership that is building a stronger and healthier food system for all of Washington. The Forum has built positive working relationships that enables the Forum to move forward collectively, doing better than the organizations could have done individually. The Forum needs to be put in statute to provide stability for the Forum. Increasing direct sales for farmers is a way to keep their farm economically viable.

OTHER: There is support for the ongoing, good work of the Forum. It would be really helpful to have the Forum and the mission of the Forum in statute. The Forum started with the intention of bringing together the diverse interests engaged in food system issues in a collaborative and inclusive manner. Based on the current budget proviso, the Forum is beginning to develop an implementation workplan to advance the recommendations. By having the Forum put into statute, it will ensure that the great work of the Forum continues into the future and that the implementation plans are implemented. Food system issues are complex and best addressed holistically, across many sectors. The Forum has come together to find common ground and practical, implementable solutions for making improvements to Washington's food system.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Judy Warnick, Prime Sponsor; Claire Lane, Anti-Hunger and Nutrition Coalition; Christina Wong, Director of Public Policy and Advocacy, Northwest

Harvest; Tom Davis, Washington Farm Bureau.

OTHER: Alison Halpern, State Conservation Commission; Laura Raymond, Washington State Department of Agriculture.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.