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HOUSE BILL 1731

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State of Washington

66th Legislature

2019 Regular Session

By Representatives Gregerson, Dye, Ramos, Dent, Blake, Jinkins, Peterson, Hudgins, and Riccelli

Read first time 01/29/19. Referred to Committee on Rural Development, Agriculture, & Natural Resources.

1 AN ACT Relating to continuing the work of the Washington food  
2 policy forum; creating new sections; and providing an expiration  
3 date.

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

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

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

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

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

17 (d) Small and direct marketing farms are a significant sector in  
18 Washington's agricultural industry. Eighty-five percent of farms in  
19 Washington state are classified as small farms. Washington is among  
20 the top ten states in the nation for the number of farms engaging in  
21 direct sales to local and regional markets. Because of their scale,

1 diversity of agricultural products, engagement in value-added  
2 processing, and use of local and direct sales channels, these farms  
3 tend not to be represented by commodity commissions and traditional  
4 agricultural organizations;

5 (e) The state of Washington continues to lose farmland every year  
6 to nonfarming uses;

7 (f) The state's food system is the network of people and  
8 activities connecting growing and harvesting, processing,  
9 distribution, consumption, and residue utilization, as well as  
10 associated government and nongovernment institutions, regulations,  
11 and programs;

12 (g) More than ten percent of Washington households experience  
13 food insecurity or hunger and many public and charitable  
14 organizations are engaged in the distribution of food and food  
15 benefits to those in need, so there exists an opportunity to build on  
16 connections between these organizations and farmers to enhance the  
17 delivery of Washington-produced food to various food programs;

18 (h) The current food system in the state of Washington is complex  
19 and directly affected by the activities and policies of multiple  
20 federal and state agencies and local governments;

21 (i) Small and mid-scale farms in Washington provide local food  
22 and maintain a vibrant culture of agriculture. Although several  
23 programs exist to support small and mid-scale farm operations, there  
24 are opportunities to evaluate the effectiveness of these programs to  
25 reduce duplication of effort, streamline service delivery, and expand  
26 access to the farmers; and

27 (j) The work done by the regional food policy councils in the  
28 state can serve as a model for local efforts to bring together  
29 community, government, business, and agricultural interests, and  
30 improved communication between these local activities, combined with  
31 state efforts, could strengthen the state food policy system.

32 (2) The legislature recognizes the need to understand the impacts  
33 of governmental rules and regulations on the viability of small and  
34 mid-scale agriculture.

35 (3) The purpose of this act is to provide for the establishment  
36 of a forum to: (a) Increase the sales of Washington farm products  
37 through direct marketing and other regional supply chains; (b) reduce  
38 food insecurity in Washington; (c) identify opportunities to improve  
39 coordination between local and regional food policy councils and  
40 state and federal agencies; (d) identify current rules and

1 regulations impeding the viability of small and mid-scale  
2 agriculture; and (e) identify new policies that would improve the  
3 viability of small and mid-scale agriculture.

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** (1) The Washington food policy forum is  
5 established as a public-private partnership and its purpose is to  
6 develop recommendations to advance the following food system goals:

7 (a) To increase the availability of Washington-grown foods  
8 throughout the state, including by increasing direct marketing sales  
9 and consumption of Washington-grown foods;

10 (b) To expand and promote programs that bring healthy and  
11 nutritious Washington-grown foods to Washington residents, including  
12 increased public and private purchasing of Washington food products  
13 for schools, adult care programs, and other publicly funded food  
14 programs;

15 (c) To examine ways to encourage retention of an adequate number  
16 of farmers for small and mid-scale farms, meet the educational needs  
17 for the next generation of farmers, and provide for the continued  
18 economic viability of Washington food production, processing, and  
19 distribution in the state;

20 (d) To reduce food insecurity and hunger in the state; and

21 (e) To identify ways to improve coordination and communication  
22 among city, county, regional, and state food policy entities and  
23 communication between these entities and state agencies.

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

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

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

32 (c) Improvements to state or federal laws or regulations or  
33 funding relevant to the small and mid-scale farming interactions with  
34 the food system and food security in the state;

35 (d) Improvements in state or federal program implementation  
36 relevant to small and mid-scale farming interactions with the food  
37 system and food security in the state;

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

1 (f) Defining and describing the variety of agriculture in the  
2 state utilizing farm acreage, farm business type, crop and  
3 agricultural product type, and defining what the term "local" means  
4 in the context of food production and distribution.

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

6 (a) Shall coordinate with appropriate local, state, and federal  
7 agencies, tribes, and nongovernmental organizations to avoid  
8 duplication of effort;

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

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

13 (d) May form an advisory committee or committees to address  
14 issues identified by the forum and that are within the guidelines of  
15 subsection (1) of this section, as requiring additional study or  
16 particular expertise.

17 (4) The directors of the state conservation commission and the  
18 department of agriculture are responsible for appointing  
19 participating members of the food policy forum and no appointment may  
20 be made unless each director concurs in the appointment. In making  
21 appointments, the directors must attempt to ensure a diversity of  
22 knowledge, experience, and perspectives reflecting the issues to be  
23 addressed by the forum including, but not limited to:

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

25 (b) Related nonprofit and community organizations; and

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

28 (5) A majority of the participating members appointed by the  
29 directors must appoint an administrative chair for the forum.

30 (6) In addition to members appointed by the directors, four  
31 legislators may serve on the food policy forum in an ex officio  
32 capacity. Legislative participants must be appointed as follows:

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

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

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

1           (8) Staff for the food policy forum must be provided by the state  
2 conservation commission and the department of agriculture. The state  
3 conservation commission and the department of agriculture are jointly  
4 responsible for transmitting the recommendations of the food policy  
5 forum to the legislature, consistent with RCW 43.01.036, by October  
6 29, 2020.

7           (9) This section expires July 1, 2021.

8           NEW SECTION.   **Sec. 3.** If specific funding for the purposes of  
9 this act, referencing this act by bill or chapter number, is not  
10 provided by June 30, 2019, in the omnibus appropriations act, this  
11 act is null and void.

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