

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1593

As Reported by House Committee On:
Economic Development, Agriculture & Trade

Title: An act relating to expansion of farmers market nutrition programs.

Brief Description: Funding farmers market nutrition programs.

Sponsors: Representatives Linville, Clements, Pettigrew, O'Brien, Hasegawa, Grant, Kenney, McDermott, McDonald, Chase, Skinner, Williams, Santos, Schual-Berke and Kagi.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Economic Development, Agriculture & Trade: 2/22/05, 2/28/05 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Recognizes the benefits of farmers market nutrition programs and appropriates \$1.15 million from the State General Fund to the Departments of Health and Social and Health Services for 2005-07.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AGRICULTURE & TRADE

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 23 members: Representatives Linville, Chair; Pettigrew, Vice Chair; Kristiansen, Ranking Minority Member; Skinner, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Blake, Buri, Chase, Clibborn, Condotta, Dunn, Grant, Haler, Holmquist, Kenney, Kilmer, Kretz, McCoy, Morrell, Newhouse, Quall, Strow, P. Sullivan and Wallace.

Staff: Meg Van Schoorl (786-7105).

Background:

Women, Infant, and Children Farmers Market Nutrition Program (WIC FMNP)

The goals of the WIC FMNP are (1) to provide fresh, nutritious, unprepared fruits and vegetables to WIC participants and (2) to expand awareness, use of, and sales of Washington grown produce at farmers markets. The WIC FMNP was begun in cooperation with the Washington State Farmers Market Association in 1989 as a national demonstration project serving 7,000 participants at six farmers markets. In 2004, 33,000 WIC participants bought \$660,000 in Washington grown produce from 591 farmers at 60 farmers markets in 23 counties.

Eligibility for the program is limited to participants in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children. Each July, participants receive a packet of vouchers worth \$20 in \$2 increments which can be redeemed at authorized farmers markets for eligible fresh fruit and vegetables through October 31. Authorized growers accept the checks, have them stamped by market staff, and cash them at local banks. The WIC clinics provide nutrition education for participants on the selection, storage and preparation of fresh fruits and vegetables.

The Department of Health (DOH) administers the WIC FMNP. According to the DOH the 2003-05 budget for WIC FMNP includes \$223,000 in state general funds and \$1.03 million in federal grants from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). For the 2005-07 biennium, the WIC FMNP budget includes \$292,000 in state general funds and \$1.64 million in federal grants from the USDA.

Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)

The goals of the SFMNP are (1) to reduce hunger and improve the health and nutritional status of low income seniors by increasing their consumption of fruits and vegetables, and (2) to support small farmers and rural economies through the promotion of Washington agriculture. The program takes place from July through October. Eligible seniors receive a \$40 packet of vouchers in \$2 increments which they can redeem at authorized farmers markets and roadside stands. Local produce is also purchased directly from authorized farmers, farmers markets, stands, and community supported agriculture (CSA) for delivery to homebound seniors, congregate meal sites, food banks, and senior housing. The SFMNP began in 2001. In 2004, approximately 11,200 low-income seniors were served with \$341,000 in Washington grown produce from 540 farmers at 56 markets, 6 roadside stands, and 2 CSAs in 35 counties.

The SFMNP is administered by the Department of Social and Health Services Aging and Disability Services Administration in conjunction with the DOH, eleven Area Agencies on Aging, the Washington State Farmers Market Association, and other organizations.

According to the Washington Association of the Area Agencies on Aging, for fiscal year 2005, there will be a total of \$173,966 available for the SFMNP: \$62,618 remaining from the Attorney General's Office Vitamin Settlement Fund and \$111,348 in federal grants from the USDA. After \$11,000 is set aside for administration, \$162,966 will remain for vouchers. With that level of funding, 4,075 people can be served. For fiscal year 2006 and beyond, no moneys will remain from the Vitamin Settlement Fund for administration. Without state funding for administration, the USDA funding will not be available for the vouchers.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Farmers market nutrition programs are recognized for the health and financial benefits they bring to participants. Clients include low-income women and their children, as well as low-income seniors who can access fresh produce through farmers markets, congregate meal

programs, senior housing or home delivered meals. These farmers market nutrition programs are recognized for their support of small farmers and rural economies, preservation of farmlands, reduction in energy use and pollution, and collaboration between agriculture, health, social services, and food assistance programs. Because of federal budget reductions and insufficient state funding, program stakeholders may not have the opportunity to participate in the coming years.

An appropriation of \$400,000 is made from the State General Fund to the DOH for the 2005-07 biennium to expand 2004 participation levels for the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program. An appropriation of \$750,000 is made from the State General Fund to the Department of Social and Health Services for the 2005-07 biennium to maintain 2004 participation levels for the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

Low income seniors may access locally-grown fresh fruits and vegetables through meals delivered to them at home, as well as through farmers markets, congregate meal programs, and senior housing.

Appropriation: The sum of \$1.150 million State General Fund for the 2005-2007 biennium.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: The current Women, Infants, Children's (WIC) food package does not include fresh fruit and vegetables. The WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program enables low income women, infants and children to access and afford fresh fruits and vegetables. The program is facing federal cuts. This bill will help replace some of the federal cuts, and help start to expand to more of a statewide program. The health care benefits of produce are well known. These coupons are a wonderful opportunity for single mothers to set a healthy standard. We strongly support this bill that is a win for small farms, a win for rural economic development, and a win for improved nutritional status of the most vulnerable people. Beneficiaries have included 60,000 WIC clients, 11,000 seniors, and small farmers who have received \$1 million in sales. Eleven thousand seniors in 35 of 39 counties benefit from this program, and it also pumps money into the local economy. Eating fresh produce plays a vital role in chronic disease management. The program coordinates efforts with food banks and home delivered meals. The state funds leverage hundreds of thousands of federal dollars. Farmers are universally enthusiastic about this program because it is a way for farmers to get direct access to retail dollars. Surveys have shown that 50 percent of the market visitors spend an amount of money equal to what they spent in the market at local businesses surrounding the markets. The sales generated by the program have grown 20-30 percent per year, from \$6 million in 1998 to \$25 million in 2004. As a farmer in Grant County whose family has been in agriculture for 100 years, we are trying to make it economically on 132 acres. We are

surrounded by corporate farms, most of those farms are now owned by the bank. We took in \$10,000 in coupons last year, which comprised 5 percent of our sales at 14 farmers markets. We employ 14 people to sell at markets. The WIC and senior recipients become repeat customers on their "own dime." The program brings seniors out to do "old fashioned" shopping in a community atmosphere with family involvement. Farmers markets help seniors walk, bargain and socialize; teach healthy habits of nutrition; help small farmers; and alleviate limited budgets.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Caroline Tittel, Washington Association of Local WIC Agencies; Shelley Curtis, Children's Alliance; Dennis Mahar, Area Agencies on Aging; Zachary Lyons, Washington State Farmers Market Association; Kurt Tonnemaker, Tonnemaker Family Orchard; and Rosamaria Valda, Seniors of Olympia.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.