

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 2548

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Children & Family Services

**Title:** An act relating to creating a food bank outreach pilot program.

**Brief Description:** Creating a food bank outreach pilot program.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Dickerson, Pettigrew, Darneille, Boldt, Miloscia, Bailey, Shabro, McIntire, Schual-Berke, Moeller, Chase and Santos.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Children & Family Services: 1/29/04, 2/2/04 [DPS].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Requires Department of Social and Health Services (Department) to request a waiver of the interview requirement for the Food Stamp Program and if the Department is unable to obtain the waiver the Department must create a food bank outreach pilot program in which an intake worker must be located at six food bank sites to assist clients at least one time per week.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Darneille, Vice Chair; Boldt, Ranking Minority Member; Roach, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bailey, Dickerson, Miloscia, Pettigrew and Shabro.

**Staff:** Sonja Hallum (786-7092).

**Background:**

The Food Stamp Program 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 US Department of Agriculture administers the program at the federal level and the Department of Social and Health Services (Department) administers the program at the state and local levels, including determination of eligibility and allotments, and distribution of benefits. In Washington, the Food Stamp Program is called the Basic Food Program.

Food Stamp benefit program outreach provides information on eligibility and benefits to potentially eligible people with a primary goal of increasing participation. Outreach can also

include assisting eligible individuals who have difficulty with a program's procedural steps. Most Food Stamp Program outreach efforts combine general program public education campaigns with direct assistance to individual households in completing the application process.

Washington currently invests state funds that are matched by federal funding to provide Food Stamp Outreach. The State contracts with a number of regionally-based prime contractors who in turn subcontract with community-based organizations that conduct outreach and education. The Department currently does not locate workers at food banks to assist with application process. However, the Department has offered such services in the past on a very limited basis.

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**Summary of Substitute Bill:**

The Department is required to request a waiver of the interview requirement for all Basic Food applications completed by Basic Food outreach contractors. If the Department is unable to obtain the waiver by January 1, 2005, the Department is required to implement a food bank outreach pilot program.

The Department must select six pilot sites with three sites to be located in eastern Washington and three sites to be located in western Washington. To be eligible as a pilot site, the site must consist of an organization that provides food to hungry and low-income individuals.

The Department must schedule an intake worker to regularly be available at the pilot site to assist clients no less than one time per week at each site.

The pilot program expires on December 31, 2005. The Department is required to submit a report to the Legislature summarizing the effectiveness of the program by December 31, 2005.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

The substitute conditions the establishment of the food bank outreach pilot program on the ability of the Department to obtain a waiver of the federal Food Stamp Program interview requirement.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**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:** (In support) People are very hungry in this state. The Department is planning to apply for a federal waiver which will allow them to do this on their own statewide

instead of as a pilot program. This legislation will open doors. Food banks are an entry point for the system. Ninety percent of people going to food banks are eligible, but only 55 percent of the eligible actually participate. This will be a positive impact on communities because the money is spent in the community. Last year \$230 million that were budgeted for the federal Food Stamp Program went unspent because eligible people didn't get food stamps.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Representative Dickerson, prime sponsor; Linda Stone, Children's Alliance; Steve Bauck, Northwest Harvest; Linda Nageotte, Food Lifeline; Shelley Rotondo, Northwest Harvest; and Paul Benz, Lutheran Public Policy Office.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.