

SENATE BILL REPORT

E2SHB 1562

As of March 21, 2017

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: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Gregerson, Stonier, Orwall, Senn, Slatter, Peterson, Lovick, Farrell, Santos, Ryu, McBride, Ortiz-Self, Hudgins, Pollet, Riccelli, Macri, Pike, Stanford, Doglio, Fitzgibbon, Bergquist, Tharinger, Sawyer, Ormsby, Dolan, Cody and Fey).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/07/17, 63-34.

Committee Activity: Agriculture, Water, Trade & Economic Development: 3/21/17.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes a food policy forum as a public-private partnership to promote a variety of goals related to Washington's food system.
- Directs the food policy forum to submit recommendations to the Legislature no later than October 29, 2018.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, WATER, TRADE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Staff: Greg Vogel (786-7413)

Background: The Washington State Conservation Commission (Commission) convened a food policy forum in response to direction and funding in the 2016 Supplemental Operating Budget. This 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, as well as four members from the Legislature.

The Commission must report the food policy forum's recommendations to the Legislature by October 31, 2017.

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.

Summary of Bill: The Washington Food Policy Forum (Forum) is established as a public-private partnership to develop recommendations to advance the following food system goals:

- increase direct marketing sales and consumption of Washington-grown foods;
- expand and promote programs that bring healthy and nutritious Washington-grown foods to Washington residents;
- examine ways to encourage retention of an adequate number of farmers for small scale farms, meet the educational needs for the next generation of farmers, and provide for the continued economic viability of local food production, processing, and distribution in the state;
- reduce food insecurity and hunger in the state; and
- identify ways to improve coordination and communication among local food policy entities and communication between the local food policy entities and state agencies.

The Forum's recommendations must consider, at a minimum, how the following can help achieve the goals of the forum:

- increased collaboration between different levels of government;
- innovative public-private partnerships;
- improvements to state and federal laws;
- improvements in state or federal program implementation;
- identification of additional public and private investments needed to accomplish the recommendations; and
- defining and describing the variety of agriculture in the state.

The Directors of the Commission and the Department of Agriculture (Department) must appoint the members of the Forum with the goal of ensuring a diversity of knowledge, experience, and perspectives that reflect the issues to be addressed by the Forum. Four members of the Legislature may also serve on the Forum, one from each of the two largest caucuses in the House of Representatives and the Senate.

The members of the Forum will not receive compensation, but may be reimbursed for their travel expenses.

The Commission and the Department must provide staff for the Forum. Both agencies are also jointly responsible for transmitting the Forum's recommendations to the Legislature. The Forum's recommendations must be submitted to the Legislature by October 29, 2018.

The act is null and void if funding for the bill is not provided in the 2017 Operating Budget.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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 is not the roundtable. The forum established by the bill is a symbol of all of the relationships here in Washington. The intent

is to do no harm in all components of the forum and to have anti-hunger groups, large agricultural industries, local farms, and local departments working together. The forum is a public-private partnership, which includes higher education institutions to help understand the scientific aspects of farming, such as record rain, and give farmers the tools to succeed.

Each level of farming, small, medium, and large, has their own set of issues. The forum will help identify what those issues might be. For instance, each county has different health rules for their own farmers markets, which might be a hindrance to some small producers. Consequently, the bill is about identifying these obstacles and bringing them to the attention of the Legislature to create positive changes for farmers. The bill creates a good platform to discuss what is holding back small and large agriculture in this state in terms of regulations from people who care about food and care about farming.

Stepping forward, the forum can help reduce hunger and increase the economic viability of small farms. The bill brings together agricultural, anti-hunger, and anti-poverty groups. There are people in this state who want to buy local and support local farmers, and farmers want to support low income people in the state. This bill is about making the food system work as well as it can.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Mia Gregerson, Prime Sponsor; Tom Davis, WA Farm Bureau; Ron Shultz, WA State Conservation Commission; Claire Lane, Anti-Hunger & Nutrition Coalition.

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