
Human Services & Early Learning Committee

HB 1587

Brief Description: Increasing access to fruits and vegetables for individuals with limited incomes.

Sponsors: Representatives Riccelli, Entenman, Harris, Stonier, Peterson, Chandler, Gregerson, Thai, Senn, Hudgins, Macri, Lekanoff, Griffey, Steele, Goehner, Wylie, Appleton, Chapman, Lovick, Shewmake, Valdez, Bergquist, Morris, Doglio, Robinson, Tharinger, Goodman, Pollet, Slatter, Ormsby and Frame.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes the Fruit and Vegetable Incentives Program at the Department of Health.
- Requires a fruit and vegetable benefit of \$30 for participants in the Women, Infant, and Children Farmers' Market Nutrition Program.

Hearing Date: 1/30/19

Staff: Dawn Eychaner (786-7135).

Background:

Food Insecurity Incentives Program.

The Department of Health (DOH) manages the Food Insecurity Incentives Program (FINI). The FINI was funded in 2015 by a \$5.86 million five-year grant from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The USDA FINI grant period ends March 31, 2020.

The FINI incentivizes the purchase of fruits and vegetables by participants in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The FINI consists of three components: Farmers' Market Incentives, Grocery Store Incentives, and Fruit and Vegetable Prescriptions. Farmers' Market Incentives and Grocery Store Incentives provide SNAP participants with matching funds to

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purchase fruits and vegetables. Fruit and Vegetable Prescriptions are vouchers provided by health care providers to food-insecure patients for the purchase of fruits and vegetables.

The SNAP, also referred to in Washington as Basic Food, provides nutrition assistance to low-income individuals. In Washington, the Department of Social and Health Services administers SNAP benefits.

Generally, a household must have a monthly income at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty guideline in order to qualify for the SNAP. Participating households receive a monthly benefit in the form of electronic debit cards also known as electronic benefit transfer. The SNAP benefits are limited to the purchase of food items for use at home as well as seeds and plants to produce food.

Women, Infant, and Children Farmers' Market Nutrition Program.

The federal Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) provides fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables to participants. Women who are pregnant, breastfeeding, or post-partum and children ages 1 to 5 years are eligible to participate in the WIC FMNP. In Washington, the WIC FMNP is administered by the Department of Health (DOH). Each eligible client receives a \$20 benefit for the summer season for the purchase of fruits and vegetables at an authorized farmers market.

Summary of Bill:

Fruit and Vegetable Incentives Program.

The Fruit and Vegetable Incentives Program (FVIP) is created and is administered by the DOH. The FVIP consists of the following three components, subject to funds appropriated:

1. **Farmers' Market Basic Food Incentives:** additional funds that may be used by a recipient of Basic Food benefits to purchase fruits and vegetables at a farmers market authorized by the DOH.

When authorizing farmers markets, the DOH may give preference to a farmers market that accepts or has previously accepted SNAP program benefits, has the capacity to accept SNAP benefits, or is located in a county with a high level of food insecurity.

2. **Grocery Store Basic Food Incentives:** additional funds that may be used by a recipient of Basic Food benefits to purchase fruits and vegetables at a grocery store approved by the DOH.

When approving a participating grocery store, the DOH may give preference to a store located in a county with a high level of food insecurity.

3. **Fruit and Vegetable Vouchers:** cash-value vouchers that may be distributed by a health professional to a patient who is eligible for Basic Food and has a qualifying health condition, as defined by the DOH, or who is food insecure. The vouchers may be redeemed at a participating retailer, including an authorized farmers market or grocery store.

The DOH must approve participating health care systems and may give preference to systems that have operated fruit and vegetable prescription programs, routinely screen patients for food insecurity, have a high percentage of Medicaid clients, or are located in a county with a high level of food insecurity.

Food insecure is defined as a state in which consistent access to adequate food is limited by a lack of money and other resources at times during the year.

The DOH must collaborate with other state agencies, provide technical assistance and coordination to program partners, and adopt rules to implement the program.

The DOH must evaluate the FVIP for effectiveness and submit a progress report to the Governor and the Legislature by July 1, 2021. When evaluating the FVIP, the DOH must collect information related to fruit and vegetable consumption by participants, levels of food security, and likely impacts on public health outcomes resulting from the FVIP. The progress report must include a description of results of the program and recommend any legislative or programmatic changes to improve the effectiveness of program delivery. A complete program evaluation is due December 1, 2023.

Women, Infant, and Children Farmers' Market Nutrition Program.

Subject to available funds, the DOH must distribute a fruit and vegetable benefit of at least \$30 per summer farmers market season to each eligible participant in the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program. To the extent that federal funds are available, federal funds must be used to pay for the benefit.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Preliminary fiscal note available.

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