

HOUSE BILL REPORT

2SSB 6309

As Passed House:
March 4, 2020

Title: An act relating to expanding access to nutritious food.

Brief Description: Expanding access to nutritious food.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Lovelett, Wagoner, Nguyen, Walsh, Das, Salomon, Randall, Billig, Dhingra, Hasegawa, Saldaña and Wilson, C.).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Human Services & Early Learning: 2/21/20, 2/25/20 [DP];
Appropriations: 2/29/20, 3/2/20 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/4/20, 97-0.

Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill

- Requires a fruit and vegetable benefit of at least \$28 for participants in the Women, Infant, and Children Farmers' Market Nutrition Program.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & EARLY LEARNING

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Senn, Chair; Callan, Vice Chair; Dent, Ranking Minority Member; Eslick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; McCaslin, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Corry, Goodman, Kilduff, Klippert, Lovick and Ortiz-Self.

Staff: Dawn Eychaner (786-7135).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 33 members: Representatives Ormsby, Chair; Robinson, 1st Vice Chair; Bergquist, 2nd Vice Chair; Stokesbary, Ranking Minority Member; MacEwen, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Rude, Assistant Ranking Minority Member;

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Caldier, Chandler, Chopp, Cody, Corry, Dolan, Dye, Fitzgibbon, Hansen, Hoff, Hudgins, Kilduff, Kraft, Macri, Mosbrucker, Pettigrew, Pollet, Ryu, Schmick, Senn, Springer, Steele, Sullivan, Sutherland, Tarleton, Tharinger and Ybarra.

Staff: Linda Merelle (786-7092).

Background:

The federal Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) provides fresh fruits and vegetables and nutrition education to participants through farmers markets and farm stores. Women who are pregnant, breastfeeding, or post-partum and children ages 1 to 5 years are eligible to participate in the WIC FMNP. To qualify, participants must have a household income at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty level.

The WIC FMNP is administered by the Department of Health (DOH). Each eligible participant receives a \$28 benefit for the summer season for the purchase of fruits and vegetables at an authorized farmers market or farm store.

Federal rules require the federal benefit to be at least \$10 and no more than \$30 per participant per year. States may provide additional funding to increase the benefit level and are required to provide matching funds of at least 30 percent of the total program administrative cost.

Summary of Bill:

Subject to available funds, the DOH must distribute a fruit and vegetable benefit of at least \$28 per summer-farmers-market season to each eligible participant in the WIC FMNP. To the extent that federal funds are available, the DOH must use federal funds up to the maximum benefit allowable under federal law.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Human Services & Early Learning):

(In support) Having the opportunity to go into a farmers market to use a fruit and vegetable benefit to get fresh food is valuable. The WIC program itself doesn't provide a benefit large enough to purchase these items. This will provide an opportunity to backfill state support in the absence of federal dollars. The WIC FMNP provides clients with independence to shop for their own needs. The DOH can adjust the amount of the benefit based on the amount of federal funding received and the caseload. The change in the Senate version of this bill is helpful because setting the benefit at \$28 is still below the federal cap of \$30, and the DOH still has flexibility to set the amount within the federal rules. The investment from this bill is

an important public health intervention. Providing fresh fruits and vegetables for individuals with certain health conditions such as diabetes can be as effective as medication. Food insecurity robs people of choices and is often hidden. With this program, mothers and their children at a local farmers market can purchase Washington produce and improve their lives.

(Opposed) None.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Appropriations):

(In support) Historically, the maximum benefit available was \$20. The increase to \$28 allows families to have more purchasing power.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying (Human Services & Early Learning): Senator Lovelett, prime sponsor; Christina Wong, Northwest Harvest; Cindy Gamble, Nutrition First; and Aaron Czyzewski, Food Lifeline.

Persons Testifying (Appropriations): Julie Watts, Washington State Budget & Policy Center.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Human Services & Early Learning): None.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Appropriations): None.