

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6136

As Passed Senate, February 5, 2020

Title: An act relating to updating restrictions on electronic benefit cards.

Brief Description: Updating restrictions on electronic benefit cards.

Sponsors: Senators Nguyen and O'Ban.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation: 1/22/20, 1/23/20 [DP-WM].

Floor Activity:

Passed Senate: 2/05/20, 48-1.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Permits beer and/or wine specialty stores that are authorized Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or Women, Infants, and Children retailers to accept the electronic benefit card.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, REENTRY & REHABILITATION

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Darneille, Chair; Nguyen, Vice Chair; Walsh, Ranking Member; Cleveland, O'Ban, Wilson, C. and Zeiger.

Staff: Alison Mendiola (786-7488)

Background: Supplemental Nutrition and Assistance Program and Women, Infants, and Children. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food and Nutritional Service (FNS) is the federal agency that administers nutrition assistance programs such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). To be a SNAP authorized retailer under the USDA FNS program, a store must stock at least three types of staple foods with at least three varieties in each of the four staple categories, or a specialty store has at least 50 percent of sales in one type of staple food.

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.

FNS issues permits to qualified stores to accept SNAP benefits and monitors SNAP stores to ensure they follow program rules. An approved store must use Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) equipment for SNAP transactions. Approval and disqualifications are done at the federal level. The Department of Social and Human Services is the state administrator of the SNAP program.

Beer and/or Wine Specialty Licenses. According to the Liquor and Cannabis Board, there are 640 beer and/or specialty wine licensed stores. In 2011, legislation passed prohibiting the use of EBT cards at any store holding beer and/or wine specialty licenses, as well as at other establishments. Without a point of sale machine to read the EBT cards, SNAP was also prohibited.

Summary of Bill: If a beer and/or wine specialty store is an authorized SNAP or WIC retailer, the store is not required to disable the ability of ATM and point-of-sale machines located on their premises, which enables them to accept EBT cards.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This is really an equity issue in terms of who is impacted when the only access to groceries in some communities may be a store that is a beer/wine specialty store and a result of their license, they are prohibited from having a point-of-sale system. The lack of a point-of sale system then prohibits them from accepting EBT cards. This is really a clean-up bill; aligning state law with federal law. DSHS tried to resolve this issue through a waiver but that was denied.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Joe Nguyen, Prime Sponsor; Jan Gee, Washington Food Industry Association

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