
SENATE BILL 5433

State of Washington

67th Legislature

2021 Regular Session

By Senators Lovelett, Dhingra, Darneille, Das, Frockt, Keiser, Nguyen, Nobles, Randall, and Wilson, C.

Read first time 02/08/21. Referred to Committee on Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation.

1 AN ACT Relating to creating the basic food categorical income
2 eligibility program; adding a new section to chapter 43.41 RCW; and
3 creating a new section.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature recognizes the challenges
6 posed for Washingtonians experiencing poverty to navigate multiple
7 complex public benefit systems in order to access necessary supports.
8 The legislature recognizes that barriers to applying for public
9 benefits exist including but not limited to adequate internet and
10 telephone access, language accessibility, nonstandard work hours,
11 disability access, reliable transportation, and other challenges. The
12 legislature further recognizes that increased access to public
13 benefits will help promote economic recovery from the impacts of the
14 COVID-19 epidemic.

15 The legislature finds that the governor's poverty reduction work
16 group endorsed multiple recommendations to reduce poverty statewide,
17 including allowing means-tested or income-tested programs to use
18 basic food eligibility as an eligibility metric for other means-
19 tested programs. The legislature therefore intends to promote
20 economic recovery and administrative efficiency by creating a program
21 within the office of financial management to authorize agencies and

1 departments to utilize basic food eligibility as a form of
2 categorical eligibility within other programs.

3 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 43.41
4 RCW to read as follows:

5 (1) The basic food categorical income eligibility program is
6 created within the office.

7 (2) Programs that include an income or means test as part of the
8 program's eligibility requirements may apply to the office for
9 authorization to consider a person income-eligible for their program
10 if the person is receiving food benefits pursuant to chapter 74.04
11 RCW, or other benefits according to the department of social and
12 health services' benefit verification system, as provided for in
13 rule.

14 (3) The office may accept or deny program requests. If a request
15 is denied, the office must notify the human-centered poverty
16 reduction system design team of the basis for its denial including,
17 but not limited to: A barrier in federal law or rule or state law or
18 rule, or whether increasing income eligibility would increase the
19 program's caseload.

20 (4) Programs that are approved may begin immediate implementation
21 of utilizing basic food eligibility to verify income or means test
22 eligibility within existing resources.

23 (5) Programs that may apply to the basic food categorical income
24 eligibility program include, but are not limited to: The low-income
25 home energy assistance program, the community service block grant,
26 college bound, workforce development programs, and other programs
27 that are income or means tested and wish to increase their income
28 eligibility.

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