

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1784

As Reported by House Committee On:
Appropriations

Title: An act relating to addressing hunger relief.

Brief Description: Concerning hunger relief.

Sponsors: Representatives Gregerson, Ormsby, Duerr, Alvarado, Berry, Ryu, Bergquist, Peterson, Berg, Chapman, Mena, Lekanoff, Senn, Thai, Leavitt, Santos, Callan, Macri, Fosse, Riccelli, Doglio, Kloba, Timmons, Ramel, Bateman and Pollet.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Appropriations: 2/13/23, 2/16/23 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Appropriates a total of \$28 million to the State General Fund in fiscal year 2023 to support food assistance programs operated by the departments of Agriculture, Social and Health Services, and Health.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 30 members: Representatives Ormsby, Chair; Bergquist, Vice Chair; Gregerson, Vice Chair; Macri, Vice Chair; Stokesbary, Ranking Minority Member; Chambers, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Corry, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Berg, Chopp, Connors, Couture, Davis, Dye, Fitzgibbon, Hansen, Harris, Lekanoff, Pollet, Riccelli, Rude, Ryu, Sandlin, Schmick, Senn, Simmons, Slatter, Springer, Steele, Stonier and Tharinger.

Staff: Mary Mulholland (786-7391).

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Background:

Basic Food and the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The United States Department of Agriculture Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), called Basic Food in Washington, provides monthly federally funded benefits for eligible people with low incomes to use to purchase food. During the COVID-19 public health emergency declaration, the federal government temporarily increased its financial support of Basic Food. The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023, signed by President Biden on December 29, 2022, ends this temporary emergency support beginning in March 2023.

Other Food Assistance Programs.

In addition to Basic Food, there are a number of food assistance programs offered to eligible people in Washington by a variety of state agencies.

The Department of Agriculture (WSDA) leads state and federally funded food assistance programs to help people with lower incomes and people experiencing homelessness access food by directly providing food, funding, logistics services, and outreach to hunger-relief organizations and tribes.

The Department of Health (DOH), among other food-related programs, offers the Fruit and Vegetables Incentives Program (FVIP) to help lower-income families afford to purchase fruits and vegetables using a combination of state, federal, and private funding.

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Aging and Long-Term Support Administration (ALTSA) contracts with county based Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) to provide home-delivered and congregate meals to seniors, as well as other senior nutrition services, primarily with federal funding through the Older Americans Act.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The bill appropriates a total of \$28 million to the State General Fund in fiscal year 2023.

This amount includes:

- \$20 million for WSDA to provide grants to hunger relief organizations for actions to support food security in the state, including the purchase of food and supplies; investments in storage capacity; management of facilities and operations; and any other activity necessary to support food security for the public;
- \$2 million for FVIP at DOH; and
- \$6 million for DSHS-ALTSA to provide to the AAAs for senior nutrition services. The AAAs must prioritize services for seniors most impacted by the loss of federal resources for Basic Food that were provided during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Funding may also be used for outreach activities that target this population.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

Language is clarified to indicate that funding provided to DSHS-ALTSA for the AAAs may be used for nutrition services generally and is not limited exclusively to meals.

Appropriation: The sum of \$28,000,000.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) It is hard to believe that the state is in a food crisis. This is a real, serious issue for food relief providers, who do not ask for help unless they really need it. One in three Washingtonians are at risk of food insecurity. Need increased during the pandemic and continues to increase along with food prices and transportation costs. Food banks experienced more than 100 percent growth in 2022 and are starting to exceed those numbers in 2023.

Enhanced federal support of SNAP during the pandemic provided about \$200 per month to eligible participants, but the benefit will decrease to as little as \$14 to \$15 per month when that enhanced support ends in March 2023. The reduction in federal SNAP benefits will particularly impact seniors and communities of color.

Government support is at times necessary for hunger relief. Donations from private citizens and grocery stores go up and down, while demand only grows. The quality of donations differs enormously by grocery store chain. The number of grocery stores surrounding any food bank also differ enormously. This is a public health issue.

Flexible funding released quickly will help providers bridge the gap in SNAP benefits and will keep Washingtonians fed.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Mia Gregerson, prime sponsor; Lynn Kimball, Washington Association of Area Agencies on Aging; Mike Cohen, Bellingham Food Bank; Elisanne McCutcheon; Rena Shawver, Okanogan County Community Action Council; George Wright; Elizabeth Jennings, Community Action of Skagit County; and Trudi Inslee, Office of the Governor.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.