

HOUSE BILL REPORT

2SSB 5568

*As Reported By House Committee on:
Human Services*

Title: An act relating to hunger and nutrition.

Brief Description: Addressing hunger and nutritional problems.

Sponsor(s): Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Roach, Stratton, Talmadge, L. Smith, Pelz, Bailey, Gaspard, Vognild, Williams, Skratek, Murray, Newhouse, McMullen, Matson, Bauer, West, L. Kreidler, A. Smith, Wojahn, Moore, Rinehart and Snyder).

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Human Services, April 3, 1991, DP.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
HUMAN SERVICES**

Majority Report: *Do pass.* Signed by 10 members: Representatives Leonard, Chair; Riley, Vice Chair; Winsley, Ranking Minority Member; Tate, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Anderson; Beck; Brekke; Hargrove; Hochstatter; and H. Myers.

Staff: David Knutson (786-7146).

Background: Hunger and malnutrition are problems facing large segments of Washington states' population. A recent report by the Governors' Task Force on Hunger found that 547,000 citizens in our state are living below the poverty level. A large percentage of low-income families experience at least one food shortage problem due to inadequate resources. Between 20 and 40 percent of these families experience severe monthly food shortages directly affecting children. People facing severe hunger often have to wait several days before their application for food stamp assistance is approved by the Department of Social and Health Services. This can cause a severe problem for hungry families, children, and adults. Adequate nutrition is critical for pregnant and lactating women to ensure healthy outcomes for babies and infants. Other people who rely on food banks also have special nutritional needs which cannot currently be met.

The existing network of emergency food assistance programs is unable to meet the demand for the purchase, transportation, and storage of food. The United States Department of Agriculture authorizes several food programs, including the school breakfast and lunch programs, the summer feeding program, and child and adult day care feeding programs, to meet the nutritional needs of eligible persons. Many communities in our state do not participate in these programs, resulting in hunger, malnutrition, and inadequate nutrition education for persons who meet federal eligibility requirements.

Federal law allows states to exempt child support as income in determining food stamp need and eligibility. This will allow additional food stamps to be issued to eligible persons. If a state chooses to exempt child support as income, the state is financially responsible for the increased amount of the food stamps. The United States Congress is currently considering whether the federal government should bear this financial burden.

Summary of Bill: The number of eligible women and children served by the special supplemental food program for women, infants, and children is increased. The emergency food assistance program is expanded to provide additional support for the purchase, transportation, and storage of food, and to support food bank operations, food distribution programs, and tribal voucher programs. Food for persons with special nutritional needs is provided. Food bank staff will receive training on these special nutritional needs. The Department of Social and Health Services is directed to issue food stamps to eligible applicants within 24 hours of application. The Superintendent of Public Instruction is required to solicit and provide financial support for eligible schools to participate in nutrition programs authorized by the United States Department of Agriculture.

The Department of Social and Health Services is required to exclude child support as income in determining the need and eligibility for food stamps.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect July 1, 1991. However, references in sections 505, 506, 507, 508 and 509 of the bill make specific sections null and void unless funded in the budget.

Testimony For: There are hungry children and adults in Washington state right now. The Legislature should address this problem in statute and appropriate sufficient funds to solve this problem.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Margaret Casey, Children's Budget Coalition
(pro).