

SENATE BILL REPORT

E2SHB 2769

As of February 23, 2004

Title: An act relating to reducing hunger.

Brief Description: Reducing hunger.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Pettigrew, Benson, Kagi, Nixon, Miloscia, Tom, Darneille, Dickerson, Linville, Hunter, G. Simpson, Kirby, Moeller, Schual-Berke, Chase, Upthegrove, Morrell, Wood and Hudgins).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Children & Family Services & Corrections: 2/25/04.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Staff: Fara Daun (786-7459)

Background: Food insecurity describes a household where finances are short enough that the household members are not sure that no household members will go hungry. Food insecurity with hunger describes households in which the finances are such that at least one family member does go hungry at times because there is not enough money for food.

According to the USDA Household Food Security report, which measures food insecurity and food insecurity with hunger, Washington State is the fifth most "hungry" state and 14th in food insecurity. The states in the top four are Oklahoma, Oregon, Utah, Mississippi, and Arizona is tied with Washington for fifth place. Washington has been in the top five states for hunger since the federal government began tracking the information in 1996. Washington's rate of hunger has dropped from a high of 5 percent in 2000 to 4.4 percent in 2002, but all Washington rates are at least above the national average. While Washington's food insecurity ranking is lower, approximately 40 percent of Washington food insecure families are also hungry. This compares to a 30 percent national average and a 32 percent average for the western states.

Washington has a food stamp program that provides a valuable source of food for qualifying food insecure families. Most Washington schools also have school food service programs that provide a significant food source for families whose children are eligible for free or reduced price lunches.

Summary of Bill: School districts must implement a school lunch program in every school with grades kindergarten through four in which at least 25 percent of the students qualify for free or reduced price lunches by the 2005-06 school year.

School districts must provide a summer food service program in each school with an academic, enrichment, or remedial summer program and in which at least 50 percent of the students qualify for free or reduced price lunches. The sites providing these meals must be

open to all children unless the district can make a compelling case why the access should be limited. The summer food service program must be implemented in the summer of 2005 for any school with an existing school breakfast or lunch program and by the summer following the implementation of a school lunch program for those schools that do not currently have a school breakfast or lunch program.

Meals may be prepared on-site, received from another school with a qualifying school lunch program, or be provided under contract with a nonschool entity that is a licensed food service establishment. School districts that show good cause may be exempt from the requirements to provide school lunch or summer food service programs.

School food service programs provided under this act are not part of basic education and do not create or imply any state funding obligation. If federal funding is eliminated, the requirements lapse.

To the maximum extent allowable under federal law, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) must implement simplified reporting for food stamps before November 1, 2004. Simplified reporting requires a recipient, called an "assistance unit" in federal law, to report only changes of income that would make the family ineligible for food stamps and changes of address. The assistance unit must also complete a semi-annual report or participate in an eligibility review every six months.

DSHS must provide, beginning on October 31, 2005, transitional food stamp assistance for a period of five months following the cessation of TANF assistance. If necessary, DSHS must extend the household's food stamp certification until the end of the transition period.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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