

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6343

As Passed House - Amended:

March 5, 2010

Title: An act relating to the establishment of the Washington food policy forum.

Brief Description: Establishing the Washington food policy forum.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Agriculture & Rural Economic Development (originally sponsored by Senators Jacobsen, Kohl-Welles, Swecker, Haugen, Hatfield and Keiser).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Natural Resources: 2/19/10, 2/23/10 [DPA].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/5/10, 72-26.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill (As Amended by House)

- Establishes a Washington Food Policy Forum to better integrate food related policies and programs statewide.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Blake, Chair; Ormsby, Vice Chair; Chandler, Ranking Minority Member; Smith, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Jacks, Lias, McCoy, Nelson, Rolfes and Van De Wege.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Kretz, Pearson and Warnick.

Staff: Leslie Ryan-Connelly (786-7166).

Background:

Food policy councils collaborate to address challenges related to a food system. A food policy council is typically comprised of stakeholders interested in a local, regional, or state

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food system. Councils can be formed by executive order, state law, and local ordinance or through community grass-roots efforts. In general, a food policy council may work on issues related to supporting a local, sustainable food system and addressing issues such as food system infrastructure, public health, and local economic development. Examples of food policy council projects might include community gardens, farm-to-school programs, and support for food bank programs. Various forms of statewide food policy councils operate in nine states including Maine, Illinois, and New Mexico. In Washington, there are food policy councils operating in Clark, King, and Pierce Counties.

In 2008 the Legislature passed the Local Farms-Healthy Kids Act (Act), intended to strengthen links between state agriculture and state food procurement as a method to expand local markets, improve nutrition, and benefit the environment. The Act created four programs:

- Farm-to-School Program administered by the Washington State Department of Agriculture;
- Washington Grown Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Grant Program administered by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction;
- Farmers Market Technology Improvement Pilot Program administered by the Department of Social and Health Services; and
- Farmers-to-Food Banks Pilot Program administered by the Department of Commerce.

Summary of Amended Bill:

The Washington Food Policy Forum (Forum) is established. The purpose of the Forum is to:

- increase production, sale, and consumption of Washington grown foods;
- promote healthy Washington grown foods to Washington residents;
- support nutrition programs and avoid burdens of obesity and other diet-related diseases;
- protect land and water resources needed to sustain local food production;
- encourage retention of farmers and economic viability local foods; and
- reduce food insecurity and hunger.

The goals of the Forum include increasing collaboration and communication between local, state, and federal agencies, creating innovative public-private partnerships, and suggesting improvements to state and federal laws and programs. The Forum is tasked with developing recommendations with benchmarks and criteria for measuring progress of the Forum's goals.

The Forum is comprised of 25 members. Sixteen of the members are appointed by the director of the Department of Agriculture. These 16 members will represent farmers and stakeholders related to food production, marketing and distributions, nutrition and public health, anti-hunger, resource protection, food industry workers, international trade, retail grocers, restaurants, and commercial fishing. Nine of the members are ex-officio members representing state agencies and universities.

The State Conservation Commission is to convene the first meeting of the Forum. After the second meeting of the Forum, it must report annually to the Governor and Legislature on the progress of the recommendations and goals. The Forum expires July 1, 2015.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The bill will get agencies to collaborate on food security, farming, and nutrition. It is important for people to know where their food comes from and support local food production. The Forum will help address childhood obesity and promote healthy food choices. The Forum could help open up new markets and keep money spent in the local community. The Forum is a bigger step toward an overall approach addressing farm to table issues. Agencies need to be part of the discussion to reduce regulatory barriers to purchasing local food.

(In support with concerns) The bill has a broad scope and may impact restaurants. There should be a restaurant representative as part of the Forum.

(With concerns) The Governor believes the bill is very broad and would like to work with the stakeholders during the interim to address concerns regarding creating another council, funding, and how the Forum's issues would fit within the natural resources reform work already underway.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Ellen Gray, Washington Sustainable Food and Farming Network; Jim Baird, Baird Orchards Cloudview Farms; Victor Colman, Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition; Sarah Wilcox, Tahoma Food Policy Coalition; Mo McBroom, Washington Environmental Council; and Carolyn Logue, Washington Food Industry.

(In support with concerns) Josh McDonald, Washington Restaurant Association.

(With concerns) Ron Schultz, Washington State Conservation Commission.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.