

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1562

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Agriculture & Natural Resources

**Title:** An act relating to continuing the work of the Washington food policy forum.

**Brief Description:** Continuing the work of the Washington food policy forum.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Gregerson, Stonier, Orwall, Senn, Slatter, Peterson, Lovick, Farrell, Santos, Ryu, McBride, Ortiz-Self, Hudgins, Pollet, Riccelli, Macri, Pike, Stanford, Doglio, Fitzgibbon, Bergquist, Tharinger, Sawyer, Ormsby, Dolan, Cody and Fey.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Agriculture & Natural Resources: 2/2/17, 2/9/17, 2/16/17 [DPS].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Establishes a food policy forum as a public-private partnership to promote a variety of goals related to Washington's food system.
- Directs the food policy forum to submit recommendations to the Legislature no later than October 31, 2018.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Blake, Chair; Chapman, Vice Chair; Dent, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Fitzgibbon, Kretz, Lytton, Pettigrew, Robinson, Springer and Stanford.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Buys, Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Orcutt, Schmick and J. Walsh.

**Staff:** Robert Hatfield (786-7117).

**Background:**

The Washington Food Policy Forum.

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

The Washington State Conservation Commission (Commission) convened a food policy forum in response to direction and funding in the 2016 Supplemental Operating Budget. This forum followed a previous food system roundtable established by Executive Order No. 10-02.

The forum is composed of members appointed by the Director of the Commission, as well as four members from the Legislature.

The Commission must report the food policy forum's recommendations to the Legislature by October 31, 2017.

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### **Summary of Substitute Bill:**

The Washington food policy forum is established as a public-private partnership, and must build on both the work of the temporary forum established in 2016.

The purpose of the forum is to develop recommendations to promote the following food system goals:

- to increase production, sales, and consumption of Washington-grown food;
- to develop and promote programs that bring healthy Washington-grown foods to Washington residents;
- to review and develop programs that support providing proper nutrition;
- to examine ways to encourage retention of an adequate number of farmers; and
- to reduce food insecurity and hunger.

The food policy forum's recommendations must consider, at a minimum, how the following can help achieve the goals of the forum:

- increased collaboration between different levels of government;
- innovative public-private partnerships;
- improvements to state and federal laws;
- improvements in state or federal program implementation; and
- identification of additional public and private investments needed to accomplish the recommendations.

The Director of the Commission must appoint the members of the forum with a goal of ensuring a diversity of knowledge, experience, and perspectives. Four members of the Legislature may also serve on the forum, one from each of the two largest caucuses in the House of Representatives and Senate.

The members of the forum will not receive compensation, but may be reimbursed for their travel expenses.

The Commission must provide staff for the forum. The Commission is also responsible for transmitting the forum's recommendations to the Legislature. The forum's recommendations must be submitted to the Legislature by October 31, 2018.

## **Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

References to obesity, and protection of land and water resources, are eliminated. Certain steps to be taken by the forum are eliminated, including coordinating with the Office of Farmland Preservation and building on processes established by the Washington State Food System Roundtable.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date of Substitute 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 Washington food policy forum brings together different parties on behalf of one Washington. It is important both to take care of people and to help businesses thrive. There is a need to continue the discussion started in the previous food policy roundtable and food policy forum. Without this bill, there would be no avenue for these important conversations surrounding food. Existing programs at the local, state, and federal levels, as well as the private sector, could benefit from increased cooperation. The food policy forum could identify burdensome regulations. The timing of the food policy forum under the bill is good because the federal Farm Bill, which funds food and nutrition programs, will be coming up for reauthorization soon. The forum could identify important food-related issues that could then be passed on to Washington's congressional delegation for possible inclusion in the Farm Bill. The food policy forum proposed in the bill would take the forum in a different, better direction than the roundtable. The food policy forum would provide a venue where each sector of agriculture could have its voice be heard.

(Opposed) It is important that everyone have access to healthy food. The roundtable has been more divisive than unifying. The roundtable's report was concerning to certain members of the agricultural community, by addressing issues like genetically modified organisms, pesticides, and social justice.

(Other) Washington has a complex agricultural community. There are already many programs in place. There are several critical flaws in the bill. It insinuates that agriculture contributes to obesity, which is not true. It claims that food insecurity in Washington would be improved by local food production. But the United States is a trade-dependent nation. It does not make sense to focus on local food production when Washington can do what Washington does best, with crops like apples and potatoes. It makes sense to focus on the farmer, not the acreage. The roundtable did not have a farmer's opinion on it, so it is important to be cautious about relying on the roundtable's findings or recommendations. The bill does not address how to actually fix obesity; studies show that the main drivers of obesity are economic and cultural. It is important to feed people, but it's also important to protect everybody's interests. There are other forums in place that address the goals identified in this

bill, and tax dollars are already being devoted to these goals. It makes more sense to put efforts into existing programs that are already working. The food policy forum may not get all the necessary interests to the table. The current bill reads favorably to the roundtable, which is a source of concern.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Representative Gregerson, prime sponsor; and Ron Schultz, Washington State Conservation Commission.

(Opposed) Tom Davis, Washington Farm Bureau.

(Other) Madilynne Clark, Washington Policy Center.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.