

SENATE BILL REPORT

3SHB 1562

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks, February 22, 2018

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: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by 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: Passed House: 2/14/18, 71-27.

Committee Activity: Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks: 2/20/18, 2/22/18 [DP-WM].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes a Food Policy Forum (Forum) as a public-private partnership to promote a variety of goals related to Washington's food system.
- Directs the Forum to submit recommendations to the Legislature no later than October 29, 2019.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, WATER, NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Van De Wege, Chair; McCoy, Vice Chair; Warnick, Ranking Member; Honeyford and Nelson.

Staff: Karen Epps (786-7424)

Background: The Washington State Conservation Commission (Commission) convened a food policy forum in response to a proviso in the 2016 Supplemental Operating Budget. The 2017-19 Biennial Operating Budget included a proviso to the Commission to continue the work of the food policy forum with the same proviso language from the 2016 Supplemental Operating Budget. The Commission was directed to report to the Legislature with the food

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policy forum's recommendations by October 31, 2017. The food policy forum followed a previous food system roundtable established by Executive Order No. 10-02.

The food policy forum is composed of members appointed by the director of the Commission (Director), as well as four members from the Legislature. The proviso established that, in making appointments, the Director must attempt to ensure a diversity of knowledge, experience, and perspectives by building on the representation established by the food system roundtable initiated by Executive Order 10-02.

The Commission submitted the food policy forum's recommendations to the Legislature in October 2017. The food policy forum is still in the process of educating itself about food policy efforts underway in various state agencies and local communities. The food policy forum identified several areas of opportunity across the food system:

- expanded technical assistance for small/mid-scale farmers to acquire land, develop new markets, comply with new regulations that would open new markets;
- infrastructure capacity building, including cold storage, food packing facilities, expanded food distribution centers;
- institutional purchasing of Washington food and products;
- developing capacity to track local food purchasing and items available for purchase;
- strengthening hunger safety net programs to ensure they are reaching low income people in need; and
- other issues that will be identified in future meetings, based on the food policy forum's initial list of priority areas of concern.

The food policy forum plans to continue meeting in 2018, with a goal to identify recommendations, as appropriate, and report to the Legislature in October 2018.

Summary of Bill: The Washington Food Policy Forum (Forum) is established as a public-private partnership to develop recommendations to advance the following food system goals:

- increase direct marketing sales and consumption of Washington-grown foods;
- expand and promote programs that bring healthy and nutritious Washington-grown foods to Washington residents;
- examine ways to encourage retention of an adequate number of farmers for small scale farms, meet the educational needs for the next generation of farmers, and provide for the continued economic viability of local food production, processing, and distribution in the state;
- reduce food insecurity and hunger in the state; and
- identify ways to improve coordination and communication among local food policy entities and communication between the local food policy entities and state agencies.

The Forum's recommendations must consider, at a minimum, ways in which the following can help achieve the goals of the Forum:

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

- defining and describing the variety of agriculture in the state.

The Director of the Commission and the Department of Agriculture (Department) must appoint the members of the Forum with the goal of ensuring a diversity of knowledge, experience, and perspectives that reflect the issues to be addressed by the Forum. Members of the Forum should include state and federal government employees, related nonprofit and community organizations, and the food industry, including food production, processing, distribution, marketing, and retail sales. 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 the Senate.

The members of the Forum will not receive compensation, but may be reimbursed for their travel expenses. The Commission and the Department must provide staff for the Forum. Both agencies are also jointly responsible for transmitting the Forum's recommendations to the Legislature by October 29, 2019.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: Yes.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed. Includes a null and void clause.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill would formalize the Forum that has been created under the budget proviso so that there is continuity in this work. The food policy forum did submit a report but the report does not have much direction at this point. Formalizing the Forum through legislation will bring more stakeholders to the table. This bill is designed to be inclusive without being prescriptive. The Forum should be grounded in statute so its work can be ongoing and maintain a helpful, workable conversation about food policy in the state. This bill brings together a group of people to talk about issues of hunger in the state and how to work together to resolve the issue. One of the things the Forum wants to do is connect farmers to opportunities for food.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Mia Gregerson, Prime Sponsor; Tom Davis, Washington Farm Bureau; Ron Shultz, Washington State Conservation Commission.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.