

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5433

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As of February 8, 2021

**Title:** An act relating to creating the basic food categorical income eligibility program.

**Brief Description:** Creating the basic food categorical income eligibility program.

**Sponsors:** Senators Lovelett and Dhingra.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation: 2/09/21.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Creates the Basic Food Categorical Income Eligibility Program in the Office of Financial Management.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, REENTRY & REHABILITATION

**Staff:** Alison Mendiola (786-7488)

**Background:** Poverty Reduction Workgroup. The Poverty Reduction Work Group (PRWG) was created by a directive of Governor Inslee on November 6, 2017. The PRWG is co-led by the state departments of Commerce, Employment Security, and Social and Health Services, in partnership with tribal and urban Indians, state racial and ethnic commissions, employers, community-based organizations, legislators, advocates, and philanthropists. A steering committee made up of 22 people, reflecting the diverse demographic and geographic experience of poverty, set priorities and direction for the development of strategies and recommendations. The PRWG was tasked with developing a strategic plan to reduce poverty, improve communities and make needed progress related to housing, health integration, employment, and education.

In January 2020, the PRWG published The 10-Year Plan to Dismantle Poverty in Washington (plan) with the goal of building a just and equitable future in which all of

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Washingtonians have their foundational needs met, and the resources and the opportunities they need to thrive. Noting that in 2019, 1.75 million Washingtonians lived in a household that struggled to make ends meet, the plan describes eight strategies to mitigate the experience of poverty as well as preventing it from happening altogether.

The eight strategies include:

- undo structural racism—understand structural racism and historic trauma and take action to undo how they manifest in state policy, program, and practice;
- balance power—make equal space in decision-making for people and communities most affected by poverty and inequality;
- increase economic opportunity—target equitable income growth and wealth-building among people with low incomes;
- ensure foundational well-being—strengthen health supports across the life span to promote the intergenerational well-being of families;
- prioritize urgent needs—prioritize the urgent needs of people experiencing homelessness, mental illness, or addiction;
- build a holistic continuum of care—build an integrated human service continuum of care that addresses the holistic needs of children, adults, and families;
- decriminalize poverty—decriminalize poverty and reduce reliance on the child welfare, juvenile justice, and criminal justice systems; and
- prepare for the future of work—ensure a just transition to the future of work.

Human-Centered Poverty Reduction System Design Team. The Human-Centered Poverty Reduction System Design Team is a collaboration between the Department of Commerce, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), the Employment Security Department, and the Department of Health. This team is empowered to make recommendations about what the four agencies should begin working on together to create a human-centered poverty reduction system, evolving out of the work of the PRWG.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also referred to in Washington as Basic Food, provides nutrition assistance to low-income individuals. In Washington, DSHS administers SNAP benefits. Generally, a household must have a monthly income at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty guideline to qualify for SNAP. Participating households receive a monthly benefit in the form of electronic debit cards, also known as electronic benefit transfer. SNAP benefits are limited to purchasing food items for use at home as well as seeds and plants to produce food.

The Office of Financial Management. The Office of Financial Management (OFM) was created by the Legislature in 1969. OFM provides vital information, fiscal services, and policy support to the Governor, Legislature and state agencies.

**Summary of Bill:** The Basic Food Categorical Income Eligibility Program is created in OFM. Programs that include a means or income test as part of the program's eligibility requirements may apply to OFM for authorization to consider a person income-eligible for

their program if the person is receiving food benefits pursuant to law, or other benefits according to DSHS's benefit verification system, as provided in rule.

The office may accept or deny program requests. If a request is denied, the office must notify the human-centered poverty reduction system design team of the basis for its denial including, but not limited to, a barrier in federal law or rule or state law or rule, or whether increasing income eligibility would increase the program's caseload.

Approved programs may begin immediate implementation of using basic food eligibility to verify income, or means test eligibility within existing resources.

Programs that may apply to the Basic Food Categorical Income Eligibility Program include, but are not limited to the low-income home energy assistance program; the community service block grant; college bound, workforce development programs; and other programs that are income or means tested and wish to increase their income eligibility.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on February 5, 2021.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

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