

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESB 5341

As Reported by House Committee On:
Agriculture and Natural Resources

Title: An act relating to creating a location-based branding and promotion program for Washington food and agricultural products.

Brief Description: Creating a location-based promotion program for Washington food and agricultural products.

Sponsors: Senators Muzzall, Shewmake, Van De Wege, Torres, Warnick, Kuderer, Lias, Stanford and Wilson, C.; by request of Department of Agriculture.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture and Natural Resources: 3/14/23, 3/17/23 [DP].

Brief Summary of Engrossed Bill

- Requires the Department of Agriculture to convene an advisory committee to identify the appropriate scope and nature of a voluntary location-based program to promote local food and agricultural products.
- Repeals the From the Heart of Washington Program.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Chapman, Chair; Morgan, Vice Chair; Reeves, Vice Chair; Dent, Ranking Minority Member; Kloba, Kretz, Lekanoff, Orcutt, Schmick and Springer.

Staff: Rebecca Lewis (786-7339).

Background:

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

The Department of Agriculture (WSDA) oversees, manages, regulates, and supports a variety of programs related to food safety and agriculture in the state. This includes providing fee-based services to the agricultural community, promoting Washington agricultural products, and ensuring that a variety of agricultural regulations are observed. Programs administered by the WSDA address animal and livestock health, commodity inspection, food safety, food assistance, pesticide and fertilizer inspection, and business and marketing support.

The From the Heart of Washington Program (Program) was created by the WSDA in June 2002. The purpose of the Program was to increase in-state demand for Washington agricultural products, to present an accurate picture of the value of agriculture as part of the state's economy, and to show agriculture's role in sustaining rural communities. The Program was funded with one-time federal grant funds. After federal funds were exhausted, the Legislature gave the WSDA authority to establish a private non-profit corporation under the Washington Nonprofit Corporation Act to continue the Program. The Program was formally dissolved in 2008.

Summary of Bill:

The Director of the Department of Agriculture (Director) must establish an advisory committee made up of interested agricultural and food production organizations in order to identify the appropriate scope and nature of a voluntary location-based program to promote local food and agricultural products. The Department of Agriculture must actively seek nonstate funding sources to operate the program, and any funds received must be deposited in the Agricultural Local Fund.

The Director must submit a report that contains recommendations for the development and implementation of the program to the appropriate committees of the Legislature during the fiscal year that ends June 30, 2024.

The From the Heart of Washington Program is repealed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: 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 concept for this bill came out of a performance audit of the Department of Agriculture (WSDA) and is one of three recommendations prioritized by the Food Policy Forum. There were a few minor changes to the bill made in the Senate. Agricultural producers know that more commodities are produced in Washington than are consumed. Most of Washington's products are exported, but currently there is no way to differentiate Washington products from products grown elsewhere. There is a need to elevate the visibility of Washington grown, produced, raised, and caught products, including seafood, with customers both in and outside of Washington. Washington is one of five states that does not have a location-based agricultural product promotion program. Schools and other institutions that provide food service would like an easier way to identify and purchase Washington grown agricultural products. The use of other labeling and promotion programs would not be prohibited. The agricultural community has provided positive feedback on the concept.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Ron Muzzall, prime sponsor; and Laura Raymond, Department of Agriculture.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.