

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5341

As of February 6, 2023

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 branding and 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, Water, Natural Resources & Parks: 1/23/23, 1/26/23
[DP-WM, w/oRec].
Ways & Means: 2/06/23.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Washington State Department of Agriculture to establish an advisory committee of food production organizations for a voluntary location-based program to brand and promote local food and agricultural products.

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; Salomon, Vice Chair; Muzzall, Ranking Member; Rolfes, Shewmake, Short, Stanford and Wagoner.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senator Warnick.

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.

Staff: Delika Steele (786-7486)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Jed Herman (786-7346)

Background: The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) supports the viability and vitality of agriculture while protecting consumers, public health, and the environment. This includes providing fee-based services to the agriculture community, promoting Washington agricultural products, and ensuring regulations are observed.

A From the Heart of Washington Program was begun by WSDA in June 2002 and funded with one-time federal grant moneys. The purpose of the program and campaign was to increase demand for Washington agricultural products in state and to present an accurate picture of the value of agriculture as part of the state's economy and its role in sustaining rural communities. After federal funds were exhausted, WSDA was given the ability 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 WSDA must establish an advisory committee of representatives from interested agriculture and food production organizations. The purpose of the committee is to identify the appropriate scope and nature of a voluntary location-based program to brand and promote local food and agricultural products. The director is required to submit a report with recommendations for implementing and developing a program to the Legislature during the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024. The director may then adopt rules necessary to implement the program, but must consult with representatives of appropriate boards and commissions before creating criteria related to agricultural products under their jurisdiction.

WSDA and other agencies, boards, commissions, and associations may separately promote food and agricultural products.

Funds received for the program must be deposited into the Agricultural Local Fund. WSDA must actively seek nonstate funding sources to support program operation and may receive gifts, grants, or endowments.

The From the Heart of Washington Program is repealed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks): PRO: A large percentage of the market is outside of Washington and the program would allow for better marketing outside of Washington. Washington has strong product reputation but there is no consistent way to identify Washington State products. This program is very important for expansion and is a great way to market Washington products specifically. Washington is one of only five states that does not have a state-wide policy like this and the program could help increase visibility and strengthen the state's food system.

Persons Testifying (Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks): PRO: Senator Ron Muzzall, Prime Sponsor; Rick Hughes, Shorewood Communications, Inc., DBA Island Life on Orcas; Mark Streuli, Washington Potato Commission & Washington Grain Commission; Laura Raymond, WSDA; Melissa Spear, Tilth Alliance, Eat Local First and Food Policy Forum.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks): No one.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means): PRO: This is the initial stage of figuring out branding for Washington State products. Washington's agricultural products are recognized globally for their quality, safety, and value, but in the absence of a state promotion program, there is no consistently recognizable way for people to identify and select products from Washington growers. Increasing visibility promotes viability and this bill helps producers better differentiate their products in various markets. There may be more resources needed to fund this program in the future.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: Senator Ron Muzzall, Prime Sponsor; Melissa Spear, Tilth Alliance, Food Policy Forum and ELF Collaborative; Blake Vanfield, Genuine Skagit Valley; Evan Sheffels.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Ways & Means): No one.