SENATE BILL REPORT
SB 6186

As of January 29, 2026

Title: An act relating to directing the department of social and health services to apply for a waiver from the United States department of agriculture restricting the use of supplemental nutrition assistance program benefits from being used to purchase unhealthy foods such as candy and sweetened beverages.

Brief Description: Directing the department of social and health services to apply for a waiver from the United States department of agriculture restricting the use of supplemental nutrition assistance program benefits from being used to purchase unhealthy foods such as candy and sweetened beverages.

Sponsors: Senators Warnick, Christian and Schoesler.

Brief History:
Committee Activity: Human Services: 2/02/26.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Department of Social and Health Services to apply for waiver from the federal U.S. Department of Agriculture to exclude a person from using Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program to purchase unhealthy foods which includes candy and sweetened beverages.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Staff: Alison Mendiola (786-7488)

Background: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), commonly referred to as Basic Food, provides food assistance to eligible low-income individuals and families and is administered by the Economic Services Administration of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). SNAP food benefits are financed with 100 percent of federal funds from the U.S. Department of

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Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Services. The state's administrative cost for the program is funded by both federal and state funds.

The federal government sets the income and resources standards. To qualify for Basic Food benefits, households must have incomes at or below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. The income standards are updated October 1st of each year based on the federal poverty level in effect at the time.

SNAP benefits may be used to buy:

- fruits and vegetables;
- meat, poultry, and fish;
- dairy products;
- breads and cereals;
- other foods such as snack foods and non-alcoholic beverages; and
- seeds and plants, which produce food for the household to eat.

SNAP benefits may not be used to buy:

- beer, wine, and liquor, cigarettes and tobacco, and food and drinks containing controlled substances such as cannabis, marijuana and CBD;
- vitamins, medicines, and supplements;
- live animals—except shellfish, fish removed from water, and animals slaughtered prior to pick-up from the store;
- foods that are hot at the point of sale; and
- any nonfood items.

Currently, 18 states have USDA approved waivers to restrict the use of SNAP benefits for soda and sweetened beverages, candy, or both.

Summary of Bill: DSHS is to request a waiver from the USDA to exclude unhealthy foods from the definition of eligible foods that may be purchased with SNAP benefits. If the waiver is granted, DSHS is to prohibit the purchase of candy and sweetened beverages with SNAP benefits. If a waiver is not granted, then DSHS is to request a waiver annually until a waiver is granted.

Unhealthy foods include candy and sweetened beverages.

Candy means a preparation of sugar, honey, or other natural or artificial sweeteners in combination with chocolate, fruits, nuts, or other ingredients, or flavorings in the form of bars, drops, or pieces. Candy does not include any preparation containing flour and does not require refrigeration.

Sweetened beverages means any nonalcoholic beverages that contains natural and artificial sweeteners. Sweetened beverage does not include any beverages:

- that contain milk or milk substitutes;

- that are greater 50 percent vegetable or fruit juice by volume;
- that require preparation before consumption, such as powders or concentrates;
- commonly referred to as infant or baby formula;
- marketed primarily as sports drinks for hydration; or
- suitable for human consumption and manufactured as a source of necessary nutrition due to a medical condition or for use as an oral rehydration electrolyte solution for infants and children formulated to prevent or treat dehydration due to illness.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 19, 2026.

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

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