

Aging Committee SENATE FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-560

AN ACT INCREASING THE VALUE OF FARMERS' MARKET VOUCHER

Title: BOOKS FOR SENIOR CITIZENS.

Vote Date: 2/19/2019

Vote Action: JOINT FAVORABLE

PH Date: 2/14/2019

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Aging Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

The bill increases the value of voucher books for each eligible senior citizen can receive toward purchases at farmers' market from \$18 to \$25 markets in order for seniors have access to local, nutrient rich foods.

Substitute language increasing the voucher to \$50.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Connecticut State Department of Agriculture: The state department of Agriculture opposes the bill as it is, but is willing to work with the committee to draft a bill that can accomplish this, while not adversely impacting the senior population. It would have an adverse impact on the number of seniors that the department could service through Connecticut's popular senior farmers' market nutrition program. Increasing the total value of checks distributed to each senior, given the same level of funding, would reduce the number of seniors who could receive these services.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Migdalia Castro, Department of Elderly Services of New Haven: Ms. Castro testified that this bill will increase Senior's access to purchase nutrient rich local food, and ultimately supports efforts for senior citizens to age in place, appropriately in their homes.

John L. Cattelan, Connecticut Alliance of YMCAs: Mr. Cattelan testified that many Senior Citizens are living in areas designated as food deserts, and this bill will allow senior citizens more access to fresh and locally grown food.

Nicholas Colavolpe, Aging Committee of the City of New Haven: Mr. Colavolpe testified in support of the increase of the value of Farmers Market Voucher Books for senior citizens from \$18 to \$25 because under the present amount seniors do not have the flexibility to shop at different markets. The present amount of \$18 is not sufficient for good nutrition and needed vegetables.

Bryan Hulburt, Connecticut Farm Bureau: Mr. Hulburt testified that, the increase will allow seniors more variety to purchase healthier foods, contributing to a healthier diet. In addition, producers have the opportunity to create customer awareness and loyalty for when seniors spend there.

Amelia Reese Masterson, CitySeed: Increasing the value of the SFMNP coupons from \$18 to \$25 per voucher booklet for each senior would support vulnerable seniors in New Haven to access fresh produce while also supporting farm viability across Connecticut. The program would help support CT farmers while also addressing food insecurity amongst senior citizens.

Susan Pronovost, Connecticut Greenhouse Growers Association: Ms. Pronovost testified that she conceptually supports the bill and that the increase of the senior farmers market vouchers from \$18 to \$25 would be beneficial to seniors who live on limited budgets, especially those in urban areas who would otherwise not have access to the state's farmers

Shannon Yearwood, End Hunger Connecticut!: Ms. Yearwood testified that she supports the idea of the increase and its ability to help increase the purchasing power for seniors at farmers markets. However she is supportive of the bill/concept under the condition that "total funding is commensurate with the increased coupon amount." She states that the individual benefit proposed at \$25 per check booklet would be a 39% increase over the current \$18 allocation. Ms. Yearwood testified that the total appropriation for this program would need to increase by at least 39% to have the impact it is intending to.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None Expressed for Proposed Bill No. 560

Reported by:
Gaia McDermott, Clerk
Avarice Jacovino, Assistant Clerk

Date: 2/20/2019