



General Assembly

January Session, 2023

Raised Bill No. 6854

LCO No. 5053



Referred to Committee on HUMAN SERVICES

Introduced by:
(HS)

***AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE OFFICE OF THE FOOD ACCESS
ADVOCATE AND TAX INCENTIVES FOR GROCERY STORES IN
FOOD DESERTS.***

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2023*) (a) As used in this section
2 and sections 2 and 3 of this act:

3 (1) "COVID-19" means the respiratory disease designated by the
4 World Health Organization on February 11, 2020, as coronavirus 2019,
5 and any related mutation thereof recognized by said organization as a
6 communicable respiratory disease;

7 (2) "Food insecurity" means a household-level economic and social
8 condition of limited or uncertain access to sufficient and nutritionally
9 adequate food;

10 (3) "Food insecurity program" means a nutrition program in the state
11 intended for households with limited or uncertain access to sufficient
12 and nutritionally adequate food;

13 (4) "Food desert" means an area identified as a food desert in the Food
14 Access Research Atlas produced by the United States Department of
15 Agriculture's Economic Research Service;

16 (5) "Food recovery organization" means a public or private entity,
17 including, but not limited to, a community-based organization, food
18 bank, food pantry or soup kitchen, that, on a nonprofit basis and in the
19 ordinary course of such entity's business or operations, provides
20 nutritional assistance to individuals in the state who are in need of such
21 assistance, free of charge; and

22 (6) "Nutritionally adequate food" means food that provides sufficient
23 nutrients and proteins consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for
24 Americans recommended by the United States Department of
25 Agriculture and the United States Department of Health and Human
26 Services.

27 (b) There is established the Office of the Food Access Advocate,
28 which shall be within the Department of Social Services for
29 administrative purposes only. The Office of the Food Access Advocate
30 shall:

31 (1) Coordinate outreach for food insecurity programs, including, but
32 not limited to, developing new initiatives and outreach campaigns and
33 identifying best practices to increase enrollment in the state's food
34 insecurity programs;

35 (2) Provide support to the United Way's 2-1-1 Infoline program as the
36 state's twenty-four hour toll-free hunger hotline to assist in making
37 information about the state's food insecurity programs as widely
38 available as possible;

39 (3) Create, support, monitor and make public data concerning food
40 insecurity throughout the state on a town-by-town level;

41 (4) Support grant application processes related to food insecurity for
42 in-state food recovery organizations and state departments by

43 monitoring available grants, recommending grant applications,
44 coordinating grants promoting equity in food access and assisting with
45 the grant application process;

46 (5) Coordinate communication with and between food recovery
47 organizations, supermarkets and groups that work with the facilitation
48 of food donations;

49 (6) Establish best practices for food recovery organizations to reduce
50 food waste and to distribute more fresh produce and proteins to food
51 insecurity programs and food banks;

52 (7) Collaborate with research organizations and universities to
53 monitor research on areas that are underserved by current food
54 insecurity programs;

55 (8) Collaborate with state and community partners to develop a
56 strategic plan to address identified gaps in areas that are unserved by
57 current food insecurity programs;

58 (9) Oversee the development and implementation of public-private
59 partnerships to address food insecurity;

60 (10) Provide support in coordinating assistance to address food
61 insecurity during federal or state declared states of emergency;

62 (11) Coordinate food insecurity programming and initiatives for
63 institutions of higher education with the Office of Higher Education;

64 (12) Advocate for health, economic and agricultural policies that
65 reduce food insecurity, including, but not limited to, policies promoting
66 a living wage, housing security and health care access;

67 (13) Establish a system that easily disaggregates data by race, age,
68 type of household and socioeconomic group to further analysis of
69 disproportionate impacts of food security;

70 (14) Assess all (A) reports regarding food insecurity or food policy

71 produced by government task forces, grantees and partnerships with
72 nonprofit organizations, (B) food security programs offered in the state,
73 and (C) policy recommendations created by past and present city-level
74 food policy councils to create an actionable blueprint to combat food
75 insecurity;

76 (15) Support community-led efforts to create an environmentally
77 sustainable and socially just food system;

78 (16) Create (A) a blueprint that will increase access to the production
79 and sale of locally grown foods, and (B) a centralized database for food
80 banks, supermarkets, food rescue organizations and others to work
81 together to economize efficiency and reduce waste;

82 (17) Craft policy position documents, talking points and other
83 materials for internal and external communication;

84 (18) Partner with industry leaders, trade associations,
85 nongovernmental organizations, institutions that research food
86 insecurity, charitable foundations and other external groups to align
87 and build support for policy positions;

88 (19) Implement self-sustainable food practices where residents can
89 grow their own food or pick their own food by creating more edible
90 green spaces in neighborhoods, schools, public parks, community
91 centers and other common areas;

92 (20) Support the establishment and growth of programs in which
93 mobile food trucks serve communities with low levels of transportation
94 options;

95 (21) Advocate for universal school meals and summer programs for
96 youth and underserved persons;

97 (22) Facilitate the coordination of efforts between food policy councils
98 and community and state entities;

99 (23) Create and publicly release annual reports on findings regarding

100 food insecurity and recommendations to reduce food insecurity; and

101 (24) Implement recommendations from the National Strategy on
102 Hunger, Nutrition and Health concerning community lessons on
103 growing, healthy storage and cooking of food.

104 Sec. 2. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2023*) (a) The administrator and
105 chief executive officer of the Office of the Food Access Advocate,
106 established pursuant to section 1 of this act, shall be appointed by the
107 Governor with the approval of the General Assembly and be known as
108 the Food Access Advocate. The advocate shall be a person qualified by
109 training and experience to perform the duties of the office. Any vacancy
110 occurring in the position shall be filled in the same manner as the
111 original appointment, except that if the advocate dies, resigns, becomes
112 ineligible to serve for any reason or is removed from office, the
113 Governor shall appoint an acting Food Access Advocate, who shall
114 serve until the appointment and qualification of the advocate's
115 successor. An acting Food Access Advocate shall exercise all the powers
116 and duties of the Food Access Advocate pursuant to the provisions of
117 this section.

118 (b) The Food Access Advocate, as administrator and chief executive
119 officer of the office, may:

120 (1) Administer and organize the work of the office and establish such
121 administrative subdivisions as the advocate may deem necessary,
122 proper and expedient;

123 (2) Formulate and adopt rules and regulations and prescribe duties
124 for the efficient conduct of the business, work and general
125 administration of the office;

126 (3) Delegate to subordinate officers or employees in the office such
127 power as the Food Access Advocate may deem desirable to be exercised
128 under the advocate's supervision and control;

129 (4) Appoint and remove clerical, administrative and other secretarial

130 assistants as may be required for the proper conduct of the office, subject
131 to available appropriations;

132 (5) Within available appropriations, appoint, retain or employ any
133 officers, financial managers, social workers or other professionally
134 qualified personnel on a contract basis or otherwise as the advocate
135 deems necessary;

136 (6) Maintain suitable headquarters for the office and such other
137 quarters the advocate deems necessary for the proper functioning of the
138 office;

139 (7) Solicit and accept grants or funds from the federal government
140 and from other public and any private sources for any of the purposes
141 of this section, provided any such state funds shall be expended only
142 within available appropriations;

143 (8) Serve as the food access liaison between the Departments of
144 Agriculture, Education and Social Services; and

145 (9) Establish an Internet web site for the office and perform such other
146 functions as may be prescribed by law.

147 (c) The Food Access Advocate shall file annual reports not later than
148 January fifteenth, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of
149 the general statutes, to the joint standing committees of the General
150 Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to children, education,
151 the environment, human services and public health on the status of food
152 insecurity in the state along with recommendations on reducing food
153 insecurity.

154 Sec. 3. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2023*) The Office of the Food Access
155 Advocate, established pursuant to section 1 of this act, shall collect,
156 maintain and make publicly available on its Internet web site a link that
157 provides access to a repository of information regarding food access and
158 insecurity, including, but not limited to:

159 (1) Breakdowns of food insecurity by town and United States census

160 tract based on reports produced by the United States Census Bureau,
161 the United States Department of Agriculture and nonprofit
162 organizations that track food insecurity;

163 (2) The number and location of food deserts in the state and average
164 distance traveled for a person within such food desert to obtain
165 nutritious food;

166 (3) The number of food recovery organizations by town or United
167 States census tract and numbers of persons they serve compared to
168 numbers of persons with food insecurity in such town or United States
169 Census tract;

170 (4) The amount of food recovered and wasted per town or United
171 States Census tract;

172 (5) The estimated number of homeless persons and immigrants
173 without legal residency status per town or United States Census tract;
174 and

175 (6) The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the number of food
176 insecure persons by town or United States Census tract.

177 Sec. 4. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2023*) (a) As used in this section, (1)
178 "food desert" has the same meaning as provided in section 1 of this act,
179 and (2) "grocery store" means a retail facility (A) (i) at which at least
180 ninety per cent of square footage is used for the display and sale of food
181 products with (ii) at least twenty per cent of such square footage used
182 to display and sell fresh produce, dairy and meat products, and (B) that
183 is constructed, rehabilitated, remodeled or refurbished in accordance
184 with the provisions of subsection (b) of section 31-53c of the general
185 statutes.

186 (b) Any municipality may by ordinance provide for the abatement, in
187 part or in whole, of real property taxes on any new grocery store
188 established in a food desert for the assessment years beginning on
189 October 1, 2023, and October 1, 2024. Such ordinance shall prescribe

190 requirements for such abatement and an application process.

191 Sec. 5. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2023*) The state, acting by and in the
192 discretion of the Commissioner of Economic and Community
193 Development, may, within available appropriations, enter into a
194 contract with a municipality for state financial assistance in the form of
195 a state grant-in-aid to the municipality not to exceed the amount of taxes
196 abated by the municipality pursuant to section 4 of this act. Such grant-
197 in-aid shall be paid to the municipality in each of the assessment years
198 commencing on October 1, 2023, and October 1, 2024, in an amount not
199 to exceed the amount of taxes abated for each such year.

200 Sec. 6. (*Effective October 1, 2023*) (a) As used in this section, (1) "food
201 desert" has the same meaning as provided in section 1 of this act, and
202 (2) "grocery store" has the same meaning as provided in section 4 of this
203 act.

204 (b) The Commissioner of Economic and Community Development,
205 in consultation with the Commissioner of Agriculture, shall develop a
206 strategic plan to (1) provide incentives for the construction of a grocery
207 store in a food desert, and (2) expand opportunities for residents of food
208 deserts to gain access to nutritious food.

209 (c) The Commissioner of Economic and Community Development
210 shall file a report on the strategic plan, in accordance with the provisions
211 of section 11-4a of the general statutes, not later than January 1, 2024, to
212 the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having
213 cognizance of matters relating to commerce, the environment, finance,
214 revenue and bonding, human services and planning and development.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>October 1, 2023</i>	New section
Sec. 2	<i>October 1, 2023</i>	New section
Sec. 3	<i>October 1, 2023</i>	New section
Sec. 4	<i>October 1, 2023</i>	New section
Sec. 5	<i>October 1, 2023</i>	New section

Sec. 6	October 1, 2023	New section
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Statement of Purpose:

To create the Office of the Food Access Advocate to provide for a centralized resource to address food insecurity in the state and provide tax incentives for the location of grocery stores in food deserts.

[Proposed deletions are enclosed in brackets. Proposed additions are indicated by underline, except that when the entire text of a bill or resolution or a section of a bill or resolution is new, it is not underlined.]