Substitute House Bill No. 5003

Public Act No. 24-82

AN ACT CONCERNING CHILD AND FAMILY NUTRITION.

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

Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) Not later than January 1, 2025, the Department of Public Health, in collaboration with the Departments of Social Services and Agriculture, shall develop a plan to streamline cross-enrollment of any child who is receiving services under HUSKY A, as defined in section 17b-290 of the general statutes, in (1) the federal Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children administered by the Department of Public Health pursuant to section 19a-59c of the general statutes, (2) the supplemental nutrition assistance program administered by the Department of Social Services pursuant to the federal Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 and section 17b-2 of the general statutes, and (3) the Connecticut Farmers' Market/Women, Infants and Children Nutrition Program administered by the Department of Agriculture pursuant to section 22-6h of the general statutes. Such plan shall include, but need not be limited to, using licensed health care professionals employed by the Department of Public Health to make an initial assessment regarding whether a child meets the criteria for enrollment in the federal Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children.

(b) Not later than January 1, 2025, the Departments of Public Health,

Social Services and Agriculture shall (1) jointly create, in clear and readily understandable language and graphics, a simple fact sheet containing the eligibility requirements for, instructions for applying to and types of benefits provided by HUSKY A and the programs described in subdivisions (1) to (3), inclusive, of subsection (a) of this section, and (2) translate the fact sheet into the five most commonly spoken languages in the state, as determined by the Commissioners of Public Health, Social Services and Agriculture. Such fact sheet shall include a telephone number for the administrative or outreach office of the HUSKY A program that members of the public may contact with questions regarding the program.

(c) Not later than January 1, 2025, the Commissioners of Public Health, Social Services and Agriculture shall jointly report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to public health, human services and the environment regarding (1) the plan developed pursuant to subsection (a) of this section and the anticipated implementation date of such plan, and (2) a copy of the fact sheet created pursuant to subsection (b) of this section.

(d) Not later than January 1, 2025, the Commissioners of Public Health, Social Services and Agriculture shall make (1) the applications for HUSKY A and the programs described in subsection (a) of this section, and (2) the fact sheet created pursuant to subsection (b) of this section, or the information contained in the fact sheet, available and easily accessible to potential applicants both electronically and telephonically, including, but not limited to, through conspicuously posting such applications and fact sheet, and the translations for the fact sheet made pursuant to subsection (b) of this section, on the Internet web sites of the Departments of Public Health, Social Services and Agriculture.

(e) Not later than January 1, 2025, the Commissioner of Public Health shall distribute the fact sheet created pursuant to subsection (b) of this section to each provider of pediatric health care and obstetrics and gynecology services in the state at the time such provider (1) is initially licensed by the Department of Public Health, and (2) renews such provider's license with the department, for provision to the provider's patients.

Sec. 2. Section 17b-790b of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

[The Departments**]** Not later than January 1, 2025, the Commissioner of Social Services, in collaboration with the Commissioners of Public Health, Agriculture and Education, shall **[**collaborate**]** take action to decrease hunger **[**resulting from the recession**]** in the state by (1) coordinating, within available appropriations, state-wide public access, information and outreach, and promoting, within available appropriations, cross-referral and collocation of entry points and application processes for (A) the **[**federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, child nutrition programs and**]** supplemental nutrition assistance program administered by the Department of Social Services pursuant to the federal Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 and section 17b-2, (B) the federal Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children administered by the Department of Public Health pursuant to section 19a-59c, (C) the Connecticut Farmers' Market/Women, Infants and Children Nutrition Program administered by the Department of Agriculture pursuant to section 22-6h, and (D) any other child nutrition programs administered by said departments or the State Department of Education, and **[**increase**]** (2) attempting to secure federal reimbursements and any additional funding for the costs of administering said programs.

Sec. 3. Section 10-215h of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2024*):

(a) The Department of Education shall administer, within available appropriations and in collaboration with the Office of Early Childhood, a child nutrition outreach program to increase (1) participation in the federal School Breakfast Program, federal Summer Food Service Program and federal Child and Adult Care Food Program; and (2) federal reimbursement for such programs.

(b) The child nutrition outreach program shall:

(1) Encourage schools to (A) participate in the federal School Breakfast Program; (B) employ innovative breakfast service methods where students eat their breakfast in their classrooms or elsewhere after school starts, rather than only before school and only in the cafeteria; and (C) apply to the in-classroom breakfast grant program pursuant to section 10-215g;

(2) (A) Encourage local and regional school districts to sponsor Summer Food Service Program sites; (B) recruit other sponsors of such sites; and (C) make grants to site sponsors to assist them in increasing child participation;

(3) Encourage child care centers, group child care homes and family child care homes, as such terms are described in section 19a-77, to participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, including, but not limited to, through the sharing of relevant data between the department and the office; and

(4) Publicize the availability of federally funded child nutrition programs throughout the state.

Sec. 4. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) Not later than January 1, 2025, the Commissioner of Public Health shall consider, to the extent permissible under federal law, each nutrition education program offered as part of the supplemental nutrition assistance program administered by the Department of Social Services pursuant to the

federal Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 and section 17b-2 of the general statutes as a nutrition education program that qualifies under the federal Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children administered by the Department of Public Health pursuant to section 19a-59c of the general statutes as a nutrition education program the participation in which satisfies the requirement that a recipient of services from said program shall receive nutrition education to maintain eligibility to receive such services.

Sec. 5. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) Not later than January 1, 2025, and annually thereafter, the Commissioner of Agriculture shall (1) develop educational materials regarding the benefits to a farmers' market in (A) accepting payment for products through the federal Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children administered by the Department of Public Health pursuant to section 19a-59c of the general statutes and the supplemental nutrition assistance program administered by the Department of Social Services pursuant to the federal Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 and section 17b-2 of the general statutes, and (B) participating, to the extent feasible, in the Connecticut Farmers' Market/Women, Infants and Children Nutrition Program administered by the Department of Agriculture pursuant to section 22-6h of the general statutes, and (2) distribute such educational materials to farmers' markets throughout the state.

(b) Not later than January 1, 2025, the Department of Agriculture shall (1) purchase the necessary equipment to enable recipients of benefits or services from the programs described in subparagraphs (A) and (B) of subdivision (1) of subsection (a) of this section to make a purchase at a farmers' market in the state, and (2) establish a program to loan or otherwise make such equipment available to farmers' markets throughout the state.

Sec. 6. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) Not later than January 1, 2025, and annually thereafter, the Commissioner of Public Health shall report,

in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to public health and human services regarding (1) the Department of Public Health's plan for expending the funds received for administering the federal Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children pursuant to section 19a-59c of the general statutes for the next calendar year, and (2) a detailed list of expenditures of such funds for administering said program during the immediately preceding calendar year.

Sec. 7. (*Effective from passage*) (a) Not later than January 1, 2025, the Commissioners of Public Health, Social Services, Agriculture and Administrative Services shall jointly develop a plan for all nutrition-based programs administered by the Departments of Public Health, Human Services and Agriculture concerning (1) the creation of a common application or an application portal, (2) data sharing, and (3) increased automatic enrollment or referrals across said departments and such programs.

(b) Not later than January 1, 2025, said commissioners shall jointly report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to public health, human services, the environment and appropriations and the budgets of state agencies regarding the status of such plan.

Sec. 8. (*Effective from passage*) (a) Not later than August 1, 2024, the executive director of the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity shall convene a working group to study and recommend strategies for expanding participation in federal nutrition programs. Such study shall include, but need not be limited to, the benefits of expanding participation in such programs and strategies for funding and implementing such an expansion.

(b) The working group shall consist of the following members:

(1) One person appointed by speaker of the House of Representatives;

(2) One person appointed by the president pro tempore of the Senate;

(3) One person appointed by the majority leader of the House of Representatives;

(4) One person appointed by the majority leader of the Senate;

(5) One person appointed by the minority leader of the House of Representatives;

(6) One person appointed by the minority leader of the Senate;

(7) The Commissioner of Education, or the commissioner's designee;

(8) The Commissioner of Early Childhood, or the commissioner's designee;

(9) The Commissioner of Social Services, or the commissioner's designee;

(10) The executive director of the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity, or the executive director's designee; and

(11) One person appointed by the Governor, who shall be an employee of a center for food policy at a public institution of higher education who is a research expert in the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

(c) The executive director of the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity shall schedule the first meeting of the working group, which shall be held not later than sixty days after the effective date of this section.

(d) The members of the working group shall select two cochairpersons from among the members of the working group.

(e) The administrative staff of the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity shall serve as administrative staff of the working group.

(f) Not later than January 1, 2026, the cochairpersons of the working group shall report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education, children and human services regarding the recommendations of the working group. The working group shall terminate on the date that it submits such report or January 1, 2026, whichever is later.

Sec. 9. Section 17b-105a of the general statutes is amended by adding subsection (d) as follows (*Effective from passage*):

(NEW) (d) Not later than December 31, 2024, the Commissioner of Social Services shall enter into a contract with an outside vendor to update the system utilized by the Department of Social Services to administer the supplemental nutrition assistance program for the purpose of enabling the department to stagger the distribution of program benefits so that benefits are distributed, in accordance with federal law, to cohorts of program beneficiaries designated by the commissioner at multiple intervals during each month. Not later than March 1, 2026, the commissioner shall commence staggering the distribution of such benefits to such cohorts of beneficiaries each month, in accordance with federal law. Not later than April 1, 2026, and annually thereafter, the commissioner shall report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a, to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to human services regarding the staggering of distribution benefits pursuant to this subsection.

Approved May 30, 2024