
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 5003

AN ACT CONCERNING CHILD AND FAMILY NUTRITION.

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Requires DPH to annually report to the Human Services and Public Health committees on (1) the department's plan for expending federal Maternal and Child Health Block Grant funding to administer WIC for the next calendar year and (2) a listing of how these funds were spent in the prior calendar year

§ 11 — INTERAGENCY PLAN TO INCREASE ACCESS TO NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Requires DoAg, DPH, DAS, and DSS, by January 1, 2025, to jointly (1) develop a plan to implement interagency and cross-program initiatives to increase access to nutrition-based programs they administer and (2) report on the plan's status to the Appropriations, Environment, Human Services, and Public Health committees

SUMMARY

This bill creates new state agency responsibilities and reporting requirements to increase access to and enrollment in nutrition assistance programs for children and families including, among others, the:

1. federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), administered by the Department of Social Services (DSS);
2. federal Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), administered by the Department of Public Health (DPH); and
3. Connecticut Farmers' Market nutrition program for women, infants and children (Connecticut Farmers' Market WIC), administered by the Department of Agriculture (DoAg).

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage, except that provisions on (1) Department of Education's (SDE's) child nutrition outreach program and (2) selling food products in schools take effect on July 1, 2024.

§ 1 — CROSS-ENROLLMENT PLAN FOR HUSKY A AND NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Requires DPH to collaborate with DoAg and DSS to develop and implement a plan to streamline cross-enrollment of children receiving HUSKY A in WIC, SNAP, and the Connecticut Farmers' Market WIC; requires the agencies to jointly create a simple fact sheet on these programs' benefits and eligibility requirements and make it and program applications easily accessible to potential applicants; requires the agencies to report to the Environment, Human Services, and Public Health committees, by January 1, 2025, on the implementation plan and fact sheet

The bill requires DPH, by January 1, 2025, to collaborate with DoAg and DSS to develop and implement a plan to streamline cross-enrollment of children receiving HUSKY A (Medicaid) in WIC, SNAP, and the Connecticut Farmers' Market WIC. At a minimum, the plan must include using licensed health care professionals DPH employs to make an initial assessment of a child's eligibility for these programs.

Under the bill, DoAg, DPH, and DSS must jointly create, using clear and readily understandable language and graphics, a simple fact sheet with the eligibility requirements and benefits for HUSKY A and the nutrition assistance programs listed above.

The bill requires the agencies' commissioners, by January 1, 2025, to jointly report to the Environment, Human Services, and Public Health committees on the plan and its anticipated implementation date and provide a copy of the fact sheet.

Before the plan's implementation date, the bill requires the commissioners to make the fact sheet and applications for HUSKY A and the nutrition assistance programs available and easily accessible to potential applicants electronically and by phone (when feasible), including posting the information on each agency's website.

§ 2 — DECREASING HUNGER IN THE STATE

Requires the DSS commissioner, by January 1, 2025, to collaborate with the DoAg, DPH, and SDE commissioners, to take certain actions to decrease hunger in the state

The bill requires the DSS commissioner, by January 1, 2025, to collaborate with the DoAg, DPH, and SDE commissioners, to take action to decrease hunger in the state by doing the following:

1. coordinating statewide public access, information and outreach,

and promoting (a) cross-referrals and co-location of entry points and (b) application processes for SNAP, WIC, the Connecticut Farmers' Market WIC, and any other child nutrition programs these agencies administer and

2. attempting to secure federal reimbursements and any additional funding to administer the programs.

The bill also makes technical changes, including removing an obsolete reference to recession-related hunger.

§ 3 — NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM ALLOTMENTS

Prohibits the governor, notwithstanding existing law, from reducing certain allotments for administering SNAP, WIC, and the Connecticut's Farmers' Market WIC

The bill prohibits the governor, notwithstanding existing law, from reducing allotment requisitions or allotments in force for administering SNAP, WIC, and the Connecticut Farmers' Market WIC nutrition programs.

§ 4 — DPH AND DSS MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Requires DPH and DSS to enter into an MOU to share HUSKY A and WIC enrollment data, perform outreach to potential program enrollees, and establish a seamless process for children who age out of WIC to transition to SNAP; requires the commissioners to jointly submit a copy of the MOU and annually report to the Human Services and Public Health committees on related activities

The bill requires DPH and DSS to enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to do the following:

1. establish a seamless process for children ages six and older who age out of WIC to transition into SNAP;
2. share HUSKY A and WIC enrollment data; and
3. perform joint outreach to people who are, or may be, eligible to receive services from both HUSKY A and WIC.

Under the bill, by January 1, 2025, the DPH and DSS commissioners must jointly submit a copy of the MOU and start annually reporting to the Human Services and Public Health committees on (1) the transition process, data sharing, and joint outreach conducted as described above

and (2) any legislative recommendations needed to implement them.

§ 5 — SDE CHILD NUTRITION OUTREACH PROGRAM

Requires SDE to administer its child nutrition outreach program in collaboration with OEC and the two agencies to share relevant data between them

Existing law requires SDE to administer, within available appropriations, a child nutrition outreach program to (1) increase participation in the federal School Breakfast, Summer Food Service, and Child and Adult Care Food programs and (2) secure federal reimbursement for these programs. The bill requires SDE to do so in collaboration with the Office of Early Childhood (OEC).

By law, SDE's outreach program must, among other things, encourage child care centers and group and family day care homes to participate in the Child and Adult Food Care Program. The bill specifies that this includes sharing relevant data between OEC and SDE.

§ 6 — WIC FACT SHEET AND EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

Requires the DPH commissioner to create (1) a one-page fact sheet on WIC eligibility requirements and distribute it to providers of pediatric care and obstetrics and gynecology services to give to patients and (2) educational materials on WIC benefits to give to obstetrics-gynecology providers when issuing or renewing their licenses

The bill requires the DPH commissioner, by January 1, 2025, to (1) create a one-page fact sheet on WIC eligibility requirements in clear and easily understandable language and (2) distribute it to the state's providers of pediatric care and obstetrics and gynecology (OB-GYN) services to give to their patients.

Also by this date, the bill requires the commissioner to develop educational materials on WIC benefits for eligible participants and give them to the state's OB-GYN providers when issuing or renewing their licenses.

§ 7 — FOOD PRODUCTS IN SCHOOLS

Prohibits the sale of food products in public schools whose name and branding are the same or similar to those available for retail sale but have different ingredients or nutritional value per portion

The bill prohibits anyone from selling, or offering for sale, to any local or regional board of education, or in any public school, a food product

whose name and branding on its packaging is the same or similar to one available for retail sale but has different ingredients or nutritional value per portion.

§ 8 — WIC NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAM

Requires the DPH commissioner to collaborate with the DSS commissioner and UConn president to develop and implement a nutrition education program for WIC recipients and annually report on the program to the Public Health Committee, starting by January 1, 2026

The bill requires the DPH commissioner, by January 1, 2025, to collaborate with the DSS commissioner and UConn president to develop and implement a nutrition education program for WIC recipients. Under the bill, WIC recipients who participate in the new program satisfy the nutrition education requirement needed to continue receiving WIC services.

Starting by January 1, 2026, the bill requires DPH commissioner to annually report to the Public Health Committee on (1) the effectiveness of the nutrition education program in reducing WIC wait times and (2) making resources available to provide WIC services to more people who are eligible for them.

§ 9 — CONNECTICUT FARMERS' MARKET/WIC NUTRITION EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

Requires the DoAg commissioner to annually develop and distribute to farmers' markets educational materials on the benefits to them in (1) accepting payment for products through WIC and (2) participating in the Connecticut Farmers' Market WIC program

The bill requires the DoAg commissioner, starting by January 1, 2025, to annually develop and distribute to the state's farmers' markets educational materials on the benefits to them in (1) accepting payment for products through WIC and (2) participating in the Connecticut Farmers' Market WIC program, to the extent feasible.

§ 10 — MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH BLOCK GRANT FUNDS

Requires DPH to annually report to the Human Services and Public Health committees on (1) the department's plan for expending federal Maternal and Child Health Block Grant funding to administer WIC for the next calendar year and (2) a listing of how these funds were spent in the prior calendar year

The bill requires the DPH commissioner to annually report, starting by January 1, 2025, to the Human Services and Public Health committees

on (1) DPH's plan for expending federal Maternal and Child Health Block Grant funds it receives to administer WIC for the next calendar year and (2) a detailed list of how these funds were spent in the prior calendar year.

§ 11 — INTERAGENCY PLAN TO INCREASE ACCESS TO NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Requires DoAg, DPH, DAS, and DSS, by January 1, 2025, to jointly (1) develop a plan to implement interagency and cross-program initiatives to increase access to nutrition-based programs they administer and (2) report on the plan's status to the Appropriations, Environment, Human Services, and Public Health committees

The bill requires the DoAg, DPH, DSS, and Department of Administrative Services (DAS) commissioners, by January 1, 2025, to jointly develop a plan to implement interagency and cross-program initiatives to increase access to nutrition-based programs the agencies administer, including (1) creating a common application or application portal, (2) data sharing, and (3) increasing automatic enrollment or referrals across the agencies and programs.

Under the bill, the agencies must jointly report on the plan's status to the Appropriations, Environment, Human Services, and Public Health committees by January 1, 2025.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Public Health Committee

Joint Favorable
Yea 37 Nay 0 (03/20/2024)