
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 5003 (as amended by House "A")*

AN ACT CONCERNING CHILD AND FAMILY NUTRITION.

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

SUMMARY

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

Requires DPH to collaborate with DoAg and DSS to develop 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, application instructions, 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 cross-enrollment plan and fact sheet

§ 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

§ 3 — 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

§ 4 — WIC NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Requires the DPH commissioner, to the extent federal law allows, to permit WIC participants to complete SNAP nutrition education programs to meet the nutrition education requirement to keep WIC eligibility

§ 5 — 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 SNAP and (2) participating in the Connecticut Farmers' Market WIC program; requires DoAg to purchase equipment needed to allow participants in state nutrition assistance programs to make purchases at farmers' markets and loan or make it available to farmers' markets

§ 6 — DPH REPORT ON WIC PROGRAM EXPENDITURES

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

§ 7 — 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 for nutrition-based programs that DoAg, DPH, or DSS administer on creating a common application, sharing data, and increasing automatic enrollment and (2) report on the plan's status to the Appropriations, Environment, Human Services, and Public Health committees

§ 8 — WORKING GROUP ON EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN FEDERAL NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Requires the (1) CWCSEO executive director to convene a working group to study and recommend strategies to expand participation in federal nutrition programs and (2) working group co-chairpersons to report the group's recommendations to the Children's, Education, and Human Services committees by January 1, 2026

§ 9 — STAGGERING SNAP BENEFITS

Requires the DSS commissioner to (1) contract with an outside vendor to update its SNAP benefits administration system to allow benefits to be staggered, (2) start staggering benefits to SNAP beneficiaries starting by March 1, 2026, and (3) annually report to the Human Services Committee, starting by April 1, 2026, on the staggered distribution of these benefits

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).

*House Amendment "A" replaces the underlying bill (File 624) and adds provisions on (1) a cross-enrollment plan for HUSKY A and nutrition assistance programs, (2) decreasing hunger in the state, (3) WIC nutrition education programs, (4) Connecticut Farmers' Market WIC educational materials, (5) a DPH report on WIC program expenditures, (6) an interagency plan to increase access to nutrition assistance programs, (7) a working group on expanding participation in federal nutrition programs, and (8) staggering SNAP benefits. It also removes the provisions in the underlying bill prohibiting the sale of

certain food products in public schools.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage, except the provisions on the child nutrition outreach program are effective July 1, 2024.

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

Requires DPH to collaborate with DoAg and DSS to develop 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, application instructions, 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 cross-enrollment plan and fact sheet

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

Under the bill, by January 1, 2025, DoAg, DPH, and DSS must jointly create, using clear and readily understandable language and graphics, a simple fact sheet with (1) the eligibility requirements, application instructions, and benefits for HUSKY A and the nutrition assistance programs listed above and (2) a telephone number for the HUSKY A program's outreach or administrative office that the public may contact with program questions. The departments must also translate the fact sheet into the five most commonly spoken languages in the state, as they determine.

The DPH commissioner, also by January 1, 2025, must distribute the fact sheet to providers of pediatric care and obstetrics and gynecology services for them to give to their patients. The commissioner must do this when the providers get initial license from the department and when they renew their licenses.

The bill requires the agencies' commissioners, by January 1, 2025, to jointly report to the Environment, Human Services, and Public Health committees on the cross-enrollment plan and its anticipated

implementation date and provide a copy of the fact sheet.

The bill also requires the commissioners, by January 1, 2025, to make the fact sheet (or the information it contains) and applications for HUSKY A and the nutrition assistance programs available and easily accessible to potential applicants electronically and by phone, including conspicuously posting the information, including the fact sheet translations, 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 State Department of Education (SDE) commissioners to take action to decrease hunger in the state by doing the following:

1. within available appropriations, 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 — 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.

§ 4 — WIC NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Requires the DPH commissioner, to the extent federal law allows, to permit WIC participants to complete SNAP nutrition education programs to meet the nutrition education requirement to keep WIC eligibility

Under federal law, recipients of WIC services must receive nutrition education periodically to remain eligible for services. The bill requires the DPH commissioner, by January 1, 2025, and to the extent federal law allows, to permit WIC participants to complete SNAP nutrition education programs to meet WIC's nutrition education requirement.

§ 5 — 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 SNAP and (2) participating in the Connecticut Farmers' Market WIC program; requires DoAg to purchase equipment needed to allow participants in state nutrition assistance programs to make purchases at farmers' markets and loan or make it available to farmers' markets

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 SNAP and (2) to the extent feasible, participating in the Connecticut Farmers' Market WIC program.

It also requires DoAg, by January 1, 2025, to (1) purchase equipment needed to enable participants in WIC, SNAP, and Connecticut Farmers' market WIC to make purchases at farmers' markets and (2) create a program to loan or otherwise make the equipment available to the state's farmers' markets.

§ 6 — DPH REPORT ON WIC PROGRAM EXPENDITURES

Requires DPH to annually report to the Human Services and Public Health committees on (1) the department's plan for expending 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 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.

§ 7 — 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 for nutrition-based programs that DoAg, DPH, or DSS administer on creating a common application, sharing data, and increasing automatic enrollment 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 for nutrition-based programs that DoAg, DPH, or DSS administer. The plan must address (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.

§ 8 — WORKING GROUP ON EXPANDING PARTICIPATION IN FEDERAL NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Requires the (1) CWCSEO executive director to convene a working group to study and recommend strategies to expand participation in federal nutrition programs and (2) working group co-chairpersons to report the group's recommendations to the Children's, Education, and Human Services committees by January 1, 2026

The bill requires the executive director of the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity (CWCSEO) to convene a working group to study and recommend strategies for expanding participation in federal nutrition programs. The study must at least include the benefits of expanding participation in these programs and strategies for funding and implementing the expansion.

Under the bill, working group members include (1) one member each appointed by the six top legislative leaders; (2) the CWCSEO executive director and the commissioners of education, early childhood, and

social services, or their designees; and (3) one member appointed by the governor, who must be a research expert in the Child and Adult Care Food Program and work for a food policy center at a public higher education institution.

The executive director must convene the working group by August 1, 2024, and schedule and hold its first meeting within 60 days after the bill's passage.

The working group must select two chairpersons from among its members. The CWCSEO's administrative staff serve in this capacity for the working group.

Under the bill, the working group's cochairpersons must report its recommendations to the Children's, Education, and Human Services committees by January 1, 2026. The working group terminates when it submits the report or January 1, 2026, whichever is later.

§ 9 — STAGGERING SNAP BENEFITS

Requires the DSS commissioner to (1) contract with an outside vendor to update its SNAP benefits administration system to allow benefits to be staggered, (2) start staggering benefits to SNAP beneficiaries by March 1, 2026, and (3) start annually reporting to the Human Services Committee on the staggered distribution of these benefits by April 1, 2026

The bill requires the DSS commissioner, by December 31, 2024, to contract with an outside vendor to update the department's system for administering SNAP benefits. The update must enable DSS to stagger benefits so they are distributed to cohorts of beneficiaries at several intervals during each month, according to federal law. The commissioner must start staggering benefits in this way by March 1, 2026.

Under the bill, the commissioner must annually report, starting by April 1, 2026, to the Human Services Committee on the staggered distribution of SNAP benefits.

BACKGROUND

Legislative History

The House referred the bill (File 320) to the Appropriations

Committee, which reported out a substitute that replaced the prior bill and eliminated provisions:

1. requiring DPH to develop and implement a plan to streamline cross-enrollment of children receiving HUSKY A in WIC, SNAP, and the Connecticut Farmers' Market WIC;
2. requiring DSS to collaborate with DoAg, DPH, and SDE to take certain actions to decrease hunger in the state;
3. prohibiting the governor from reducing certain allotments for administering SNAP, WIC, and the Connecticut Farmers' Market WIC;
4. requiring DPH and DSS to enter into a memorandum of understanding to share HUSKY A and WIC enrollment data, perform outreach to potential enrollees, and establish a process for children to transition from WIC to SNAP;
5. requiring DPH to create, for certain health care providers, educational materials on WIC benefits and a one-page fact sheet on program eligibility requirements;
6. requiring DPH to collaborate with DSS and UConn to develop and implement a nutrition education program for WIC participants;
7. requiring DoAg to annually develop and distribute to farmers' markets educational materials on the benefits of participating in the Connecticut Farmers' Market WIC program;
8. requiring DPH to annually report to the Human Services and Public Health committees on its plan for spending federal funding to administer WIC; and
9. requiring specified state agencies to jointly develop a plan to implement interagency and cross-program initiatives to increase access to state nutrition-related programs.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Public Health Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 37 Nay 0 (03/20/2024)

Appropriations Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 53 Nay 0 (04/22/2024)