



House of Representatives

File No. 645

General Assembly

February Session, 2024

(Reprint of File Nos. 320 and 624)

Substitute House Bill No. 5003
As Amended by House Amendment
Schedule "A"

Approved by the Legislative Commissioner
May 2, 2024

AN ACT CONCERNING CHILD AND FAMILY NUTRITION.

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

1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) Not later than January 1,
2 2025, the Department of Public Health, in collaboration with the
3 Departments of Social Services and Agriculture, shall develop a plan to
4 streamline cross-enrollment of any child who is receiving services under
5 HUSKY A, as defined in section 17b-290 of the general statutes, in (1)
6 the federal Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and
7 Children administered by the Department of Public Health pursuant to
8 section 19a-59c of the general statutes, (2) the supplemental nutrition
9 assistance program administered by the Department of Social Services
10 pursuant to the federal Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 and section 17b-
11 2 of the general statutes, and (3) the Connecticut Farmers'
12 Market/Women, Infants and Children Nutrition Program administered
13 by the Department of Agriculture pursuant to section 22-6h of the
14 general statutes. Such plan shall include, but need not be limited to,

15 using licensed health care professionals employed by the Department of
16 Public Health to make an initial assessment regarding whether a child
17 meets the criteria for enrollment in the federal Special Supplemental
18 Food Program for Women, Infants and Children.

19 (b) Not later than January 1, 2025, the Departments of Public Health,
20 Social Services and Agriculture shall (1) jointly create, in clear and
21 readily understandable language and graphics, a simple fact sheet
22 containing the eligibility requirements for, instructions for applying to
23 and types of benefits provided by HUSKY A and the programs
24 described in subdivisions (1) to (3), inclusive, of subsection (a) of this
25 section, and (2) translate the fact sheet into the five most commonly
26 spoken languages in the state, as determined by the Commissioners of
27 Public Health, Social Services and Agriculture. Such fact sheet shall
28 include a telephone number for the administrative or outreach office of
29 the HUSKY A program that members of the public may contact with
30 questions regarding the program.

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

40 (d) Not later than January 1, 2025, the Commissioners of Public
41 Health, Social Services and Agriculture shall make (1) the applications
42 for HUSKY A and the programs described in subsection (a) of this
43 section, and (2) the fact sheet created pursuant to subsection (b) of this
44 section, or the information contained in the fact sheet, available and
45 easily accessible to potential applicants both electronically and
46 telephonically, including, but not limited to, through conspicuously
47 posting such applications and fact sheet, and the translations for the fact

48 sheet made pursuant to subsection (b) of this section, on the Internet
49 web sites of the Departments of Public Health, Social Services and
50 Agriculture.

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

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

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

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

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

88 (b) The child nutrition outreach program shall:

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

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

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

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

106 Sec. 4. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) Not later than January 1, 2025,
107 the Commissioner of Public Health shall consider, to the extent
108 permissible under federal law, each nutrition education program
109 offered as part of the supplemental nutrition assistance program

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

119 Sec. 5. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) Not later than January 1, 2025,
120 and annually thereafter, the Commissioner of Agriculture shall (1)
121 develop educational materials regarding the benefits to a farmers'
122 market in (A) accepting payment for products through the federal
123 Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children
124 administered by the Department of Public Health pursuant to section
125 19a-59c of the general statutes and the supplemental nutrition assistance
126 program administered by the Department of Social Services pursuant to
127 the federal Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 and section 17b-2 of the
128 general statutes, and (B) participating, to the extent feasible, in the
129 Connecticut Farmers' Market/Women, Infants and Children Nutrition
130 Program administered by the Department of Agriculture pursuant to
131 section 22-6h of the general statutes, and (2) distribute such educational
132 materials to farmers' markets throughout the state.

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

140 Sec. 6. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) Not later than January 1, 2025,
141 and annually thereafter, the Commissioner of Public Health shall report,
142 in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

201 the working group.

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

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

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

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 2	<i>from passage</i>	17b-790b
Sec. 3	<i>July 1, 2024</i>	10-215h
Sec. 4	<i>from passage</i>	New section

Sec. 5	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 6	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 7	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 8	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 9	<i>from passage</i>	17b-105a(d)

The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.

OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact:

Agency Affected	Fund-Effect	FY 25 \$	FY 26 \$
Department of Agriculture	GF - Cost	35,500	71,000
State Comptroller - Fringe Benefits ¹	GF - Cost	14,644	29,288
Department of Agriculture	GF - Cost	Potential Significant	Potential Significant
Social Services, Dept.	GF - Cost	500,000	None
Resources of the General Fund	GF - Revenue Gain	250,000	None

Note: GF=General Fund

Municipal Impact: None

Explanation

Sections 5 and 9 of the bill result in the following fiscal impacts, described below by section number. Other provisions are not anticipated to result in a fiscal impact to the state or municipalities.

Section 5 of the bill results in a cost to the Department of Agriculture (DoAg) of \$35,500 in FY 25 (half year) and \$71,000 in FY 26 (full year) for an Agriculture Marketing and Inspections Representative to carry out new planning and reporting requirements. There is a corresponding cost to the Office of the State Comptroller - Fringe Benefits of \$14,644 in FY 25 and \$29,288 in FY 26 for this position.

An additional one-time cost to DoAG is anticipated in FY 25 from the

¹The fringe benefit costs for most state employees are budgeted centrally in accounts administered by the Comptroller. The estimated active employee fringe benefit cost associated with most personnel changes is 41.25% of payroll in FY 25.

requirement that the department supply equipment to farmers' markets to facilitate recipients of certain nutrition programs in making purchases there. Costs to the department are likely to be significant as there are approximately 35 regional farmers' markets that operate seasonally in Connecticut.

Section 9 results in a system cost of approximately \$500,000 in FY 25 to the Department of Social Services to stagger the distribution of federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits for beneficiaries by 3/1/26. A corresponding \$250,000 increase in federal grant revenue to the General Fund reflects the federal share of this cost.

House "A" strikes the language of the underlying bill and its associated fiscal impact, replacing it with language anticipated to result in the following fiscal impacts described above by section number.

The Out Years

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact identified above would continue into the future subject to inflation.

OLR Bill Analysis**sHB 5003 (as amended by House "A")*****AN ACT CONCERNING CHILD AND FAMILY NUTRITION.**

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SUMMARY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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)