



House of Representatives

General Assembly

File No. 151

January Session, 2021

Substitute House Bill No. 6229

House of Representatives, March 29, 2021

The Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement reported through REP. ELLIOTT of the 88th Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the House, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

AN ACT ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF FOOD-INSECURE STUDENTS AT PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

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

1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2021*) (a) As used in this section,
2 "food insecurity" or "food insecure" means the lack of financial resources
3 needed to consistently access enough food for an active and healthy life.

4 (b) Not later than March 1, 2022, and biennially thereafter, each public
5 institution of higher education in the state shall administer a survey to
6 each student enrolled at such institution for the purpose of collecting
7 data on the number of students who are food insecure and the causes of
8 and reasons for such food insecurity. Such survey shall include, but
9 need not be limited to, questions regarding a student's (1) demographic
10 background, including age, race, ethnicity, gender identity, marital
11 status, income, education and employment; (2) specific barriers to food
12 access; and (3) awareness or use of community or institutional resources
13 to address food insecurity and any barriers to accessing such resources.

14 (c) Not later than October 1, 2022, and biennially thereafter, each
15 public institution of higher education shall evaluate any services and
16 programs offered by such institution to address the needs of food-
17 insecure students. Based on the results of the survey administered
18 pursuant to subsection (b) of this section, each institution shall amend
19 any existing or establish new services and programs to address the
20 needs of food-insecure students. Such services or programs may
21 include, but not be limited to, (1) assistance and support for students to
22 enroll in the supplemental nutrition assistance program pursuant to the
23 federal Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 or any other state or federal
24 program for nutrition assistance or financial aid, including programs for
25 families, if applicable to the student; (2) providing low-cost food or meal
26 plan options on campus; (3) allowing students additional meals through
27 extra card swipes on meal plans; (4) providing financial assistance or
28 other financial student aid; (5) establishing or expanding a food pantry
29 on campus; or (6) initiating a fruit and vegetable incentive program, or
30 making such program available to students through agreement with a
31 community nonprofit organization or governmental agency that
32 provides such program. When amending or establishing any services or
33 programs pursuant to this subsection, each institution shall have the
34 goal of providing such services and programs to not less than ten per
35 cent of the number of students identified as being food insecure in the
36 survey administered pursuant to subsection (b) of this section.

37 (d) Not later than January 1, 2023, and biennially thereafter, each
38 public institution of higher education in the state shall submit a report,
39 in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes,
40 to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having
41 cognizance of matters relating to higher education, regarding any food
42 insecurities among the students at such institution, including, but not
43 limited to, (1) results from the survey administered pursuant to
44 subsection (b) of this section, (2) services and programs to address the
45 needs of food insecure students, including any amendments made to
46 such services or programs pursuant to subsection (c) of this section, and
47 (3) the number of students who utilized such services and programs
48 during the preceding two years.

49 Sec. 2. Section 17b-105f of the general statutes is amended by adding
50 subsections (e) and (f) as follows (*Effective July 1, 2021*):

51 (NEW) (e) (1) Not later than January 1, 2022, and annually thereafter,
52 the Board of Regents for Higher Education and the Board of Trustees of
53 The University of Connecticut shall consult with the Department of
54 Social Services for the purpose of identifying any educational program
55 offered at an institution of higher education governed by said boards
56 that qualifies as an employment and training program which increases
57 a student's employability and complies with the requirements for an
58 exemption, as specified in 7 CFR 273.5(b)(11), as amended from time to
59 time, from the supplemental nutrition assistance program eligibility
60 rule in 7 CFR 273.5(a), as amended from time to time. In identifying such
61 educational programs, the department and said boards shall seek to
62 maximize the number and types of employment and training programs
63 offered at the institution of higher education governed by said boards.

64 (2) Any independent institution of higher education in the state may,
65 in such institution's discretion, consult with the Department of Social
66 Services for the purposes set forth in subdivision (1) of this subsection.

67 (NEW) (f) Not later than July 1, 2022, the Department of Social
68 Services, the Board of Regents for Higher Education and the Board of
69 Trustees of The University of Connecticut shall each post, and regularly
70 update, on their Internet web site, the list of educational programs
71 offered at each institution of higher education governed by said boards
72 that has been qualified as an employment and training program
73 pursuant to subdivision (1) of subsection (e) of this section.

74 Sec. 3. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2021*) For the purpose of determining
75 eligibility for the supplemental nutrition assistance program pursuant
76 to the federal Food and Nutrition Act of 2008, as amended from time to
77 time, the Department of Social Services shall consider any student
78 enrolled in an institution of higher education in the state to be
79 participating in a state or federally financed work-study program if such
80 student receives approval of work-study as part of a financial aid
81 package to attend such institution of higher education, regardless of

82 whether such student has received his or her work-study program
83 assignment.

84 Sec. 4. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2021*) Each public institution of higher
85 education shall notify any student identified by the financial aid office
86 of such public institution of higher education as potentially eligible for
87 the supplemental nutrition assistance program pursuant to the federal
88 Food and Nutrition Act of 2008, as amended from time to time,
89 regarding (1) the qualification requirements for such program, (2) the
90 application procedure for such program, and (3) where to obtain
91 assistance in completing an application for such program.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>July 1, 2021</i>	New section
Sec. 2	<i>July 1, 2021</i>	17b-105f
Sec. 3	<i>July 1, 2021</i>	New section
Sec. 4	<i>July 1, 2021</i>	New section

HED *Joint Favorable Subst.*

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: None

Municipal Impact: None

Explanation

The bill results in no fiscal impact to the constituent units because the units have sufficient expertise and resources to carry out the survey, reporting, program, and other activities required by the bill.

In addition, the bill is not anticipated to result in a fiscal impact to the Department of Social Services (DSS) associated with the consideration of work-study requirements for purposes of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligibility for students. The bill's change (from eligibility based on participation in a work-study program to approval for one) conforms to current practice as allowed under the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, for the duration of the public health emergency. SNAP benefits are federally funded and the provision of such is subject to federal regulations.

The Out Years

State Impact: None

Municipal Impact: None

OLR Bill Analysis**sHB 6229*****AN ACT ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF FOOD-INSECURE STUDENTS AT PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION.*****SUMMARY**

This bill makes a number of changes designed to assess and address food insecurity for the state's public college and university students. It defines "food insecurity" or "food insecure" as the lack of financial resources needed to consistently access enough food for an active and healthy life.

Specifically, the bill requires public colleges and universities to do the following:

1. starting by March 1, 2022, biennially administer a survey to enrolled students to collect data on student food insecurity and the causes and reasons for it;
2. starting by October 1, 2022, biennially evaluate their services and programs addressing the needs of food-insecure students and, based on the survey results, establish new services and programs, or amend existing ones, to address these students' needs;
3. starting by January 1, 2023, biennially report to the Higher Education Committee on the (a) survey results; (b) food insecurity services and programs offered, including any changes made based on the survey results; and (c) number of students who used the services and programs in the preceding two years; and
4. notify specified students about their potential eligibility for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.

The bill requires the Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR) and UConn Board of Trustees (BOT) to consult with the Department of Social Services (DSS) to identify and maximize the number of work-study programs they offer that qualify as an employment and training program for purposes of SNAP.

Lastly, the bill requires DSS, when determining SNAP eligibility, to consider a state public college or university student to be participating in a federal work-study program as soon as the student is approved for the program as part of a financial aid package to attend the college or university, regardless of whether the student has received his or her work study program assignment yet. Under federal law, a student who is actively participating in a state or federally funded work-study program is eligible to receive SNAP benefits. Special eligibility rules apply during the COVID-19 public health emergency for students who are eligible to participate in work study (see BACKGROUND).

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2021

§ 1 — FOOD INSECURITY SURVEY

Under the bill, the survey administered by each public college and university must include questions about a student's (1) demographic background, including age, race, ethnicity, gender identity, marital status, income, education, and employment; (2) specific barriers to food access; and (3) awareness or use of community or institutional resources to address food insecurity and barriers to accessing these resources.

§ 2 — PROGRAMS AND SERVICES ADDRESSING FOOD INSECURITY

Under the bill, the services or programs that public colleges and universities establish or modify to address student food insecurity may include the following:

1. assistance and support for students to enroll in SNAP or any other state or federal nutrition assistance or financial aid program, including programs for families, if applicable;

2. providing low-cost food or meal plan options on campus;
3. allowing students additional meals through extra card swipes on meal plans;
4. providing financial assistance or other financial student aid;
5. establishing or expanding on-campus food pantries; and
6. starting a fruit and vegetable incentive program or similar program for students through an agreement with a local nonprofit or government agency.

The bill requires services and programs amended or established based on survey results to serve to at least 10% of the students identified in the survey as being food insecure.

§§ 3 & 4 — SNAP ELIGIBILITY FOR PUBLIC COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

By January 1, 2022, the bill requires BOR and BOT to consult with DSS to (1) identify any of their offered educational programs that would increase a student's employability and qualify as an employment and training program under SNAP student eligibility requirements (see BACKGROUND) and (2) maximize the number and types of these programs offered. BOR, BOT, and DSS must also post and regularly update the list of these qualified programs offered at each institution under their governance on their website. The bill allows any of the state's public colleges and universities to consult with DSS to identify these programs.

The bill requires each public higher education institution to notify students identified by the institution's financial aid office as being potentially eligible for SNAP and include in the notification (1) program eligibility requirements, (2) the program application process, and (3) information on assistance in completing the program application.

BACKGROUND

SNAP Student Eligibility

Students enrolled at least half-time at a higher education institution are generally ineligible for SNAP unless they qualify for an exemption. These exemptions include participating in a (1) state or federally financed work study program and (2) SNAP employment and training program or other eligible program.

The federal Consolidated Appropriations Act 2021 temporarily extends SNAP eligibility to students enrolled at least half-time at a higher education institution who either (1) are eligible to participate in a state or federally funded work-study program during the academic year or (2) have an expected family contribution of zero in the academic year, and meet all other SNAP eligibility criteria. This benefit extension will remain in effect until 30 days after the COVID-19 public health emergency ends.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 18 Nay 4 (03/11/2021)