

---

## OLR Bill Analysis

### sHB 5033

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

#### **SUMMARY**

This bill establishes various requirements 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, 2023, 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, 2023, biennially evaluate their services and programs addressing the needs of food-insecure students and, based on the survey results, amend any existing services and programs or establish a new service or program to address these students' needs;
3. starting by January 1, 2024, biennially report to the Higher Education and Employment Advancement 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 students about eligibility requirements 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 annually 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 and to the extent allowed by federal law (7 C.F.R. § 273.5), to consider a state public college or university student to be participating in a state or federally financed work-study program as soon as the enrolled student is approved for the program as part of their financial aid package, regardless of whether the student has received his or work-study program assignment yet. Under federal law, a student is eligible to receive SNAP benefits if they are actively participating in a state or federal funded work-study program (see BACKGROUND).

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2022

## **§ 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.

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. giving 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 making one available through an agreement with a local nonprofit or government agency.

Under the bill, a “fruit and vegetable incentive program” is a program that offers participants matching funds to purchase fruits and vegetables in any increment relative to their cost.

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

#### **§§ 2 - 4 — SNAP ELIGIBILITY FOR PUBLIC COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

By January 1, 2023, 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 respective websites. 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 regarding 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 during the regular school year and (2) SNAP employment and training program or other eligible program.

A student participating in a federally financed work-study program must be approved for work-study at the time of application for SNAP benefits, the work-study must be approved for the school term, and the student must anticipate actually working during that time. The exemption begins the month the school semester starts or the month the work-study is approved, whichever is later (7 C.F.R. § 273.5(b)(6)).

The federal Consolidated Appropriations Act of 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 (P.L. 116-260, § 702(e)(1)(B)(i)).

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 19 Nay 4 (03/03/2022)