

Human Services Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-364

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE.

Vote Date: 3/19/2024

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/14/2024

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Human Services Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

Beneficiaries on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) receive these benefits on the first three days of every month. This has led to long wait times and congestion within the Department of Social Services (DSS). This bill would minimize these obstacles by staggering these benefits into four distribution intervals throughout the month. Additionally, the SNAP program does not currently allow beneficiaries to purchase hot foods or foods that are already prepared. This restriction poses challenges for elderly, disabled, or unhoused persons who may be unable to prepare food for themselves or may not have access to housing that supports the storage and preparation of food. The Restaurant Meals Program (RMP) allows eligible beneficiaries and their spouses to purchase meals at participating restaurants. Studying how this program can be implemented in Connecticut will be helpful for those who cannot prepare meals for themselves.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity, & Opportunity, Lead AAPI Policy Analyst, Megan Baker: supports this bill stating that it will combat food insecurity, improve public health through nutrition, and promote equitable access to food for all residents. It is also stated that some studies have shown that SNAP benefit distribution in a narrow window leads to large spikes in consumer demand and small increases in food prices during and immediately after that window.

Department of Social Services (DSS), Commissioner, Andrea Barton Reeves: opposes this bill stating that the staggered distribution schedule would impose several costs for system changes, staffing, implementation, and outreach to beneficiaries that are not allotted

in the enacted budget. It is also stated that the Restaurant Meals Program (RMP) has only been able to operate on an extremely limited scale in the nine states that have implemented it. It is stated that the estimated total cost to implement the Restaurant Meals Program (RMP) in Connecticut is \$1.2 million, which is also not included in the enacted budget.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

The Arc of Connecticut, Inc., Director of Advocacy, Carol Scully; supports this bill stating that the Restaurant Meals Program (RMP) would allow disabled persons who may not be able to prepare meals for themselves to access meals at local restaurants. It is also stated that recipients of SNAP benefits may not have permanent housing or have access to certain appliances and therefore are not able to prepare meals at home.

Connecticut Association for Community Action, Executive Director, Rhonda Evans; supports this bill stating that Connecticut's participation in the Restaurant Meals Program (RMP) would expand opportunities for elderly, disabled, or unhoused persons who may not have access to housing that allows for storing and cooking food. It is also stated that the staggering of SNAP payments would allow for a more stable distribution of benefits and reduce supply shortages at grocery stores.

Connecticut Food Association, President, Wayne Pesce; supports this bill stating that the staggering of SNAP benefits would reduce long queues, diminished selection, and other challenges for both retailers and shoppers. It is also stated that this schedule would keep Connecticut in line with other states of similar population size.

Connecticut Legal Services, Attorney, Matthew Dillon; supports this bill stating that the staggering SNAP benefit distribution may reduce call center wait times and office visits at the beginning of the month. It is also stated that the staggered issuance schedule may help reduce the risk of benefits theft.

End Hunger Connecticut, Policy Director, Lucy Nolan; supports this bill stating that the staggering of SNAP benefits would reduce wait times and congestion for DSS. It is also stated that the implantation of the Restaurant Meals Program (RMP) would increase accessibility to food for vulnerable groups and would allow Connecticut to join its neighboring states, Massachusetts and Rhode Island, in offering this option.

The following individuals have submitted written testimony in support of this bill.

Connecticut Resident, Hamden, Halle Lisette Pierce

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

Reported by: Jaclyn Rauch

Date: April 8, 2024