

PLEASE NOTE: Legislative Information **cannot** perform research, provide legal advice, or interpret Maine law. For legal assistance, please contact a qualified attorney.

Amend the resolve by striking out the title and substituting the following:

'Resolve, To Reduce Hunger and Increase Access to Healthy Foods by Participants in the Food Supplement Program'

Amend the resolve by striking out everything after the title and before the summary and inserting the following:

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Preamble. Whereas, 15% of Maine households, or approximately 200,000 Maine people, suffer from food insecurity and that number has increased in recent years; and

Whereas, Maine ranks 7th in the nation and first in New England for the percentage of population with very low food security; and

Whereas, Maine ranks first in New England for child food insecurity, with nearly one in every 4 children being food insecure; and

Whereas, the state-administered federal food supplement program referred to as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, is the first line of defense against hunger and under-nutrition, boosting food security and health benefits; and

Whereas, according to the United States Department of Agriculture, the American diet is far from optimal and access to fresh fruits and vegetables is particularly difficult for people with low income; and

Whereas, research shows that education and incentives that promote healthy eating address poor dietary habits and obesity, decrease hunger and improve health; and

Whereas, the United States Department of Agriculture now provides educational grant opportunities and other initiatives to facilitate the use of SNAP benefits at farmers' markets and community-supported agriculture projects, but Maine is not fully utilizing its share of these funds; and

Whereas, the United States Department of Agriculture provides opportunities for states to use evidence-based strategies in SNAP nutrition education programs to address obesity and encourage the purchase of healthy foods with SNAP benefits; and

Whereas, it is critical that the State bring together experts to advise the Legislature on opportunities to maximize new opportunities provided through SNAP nutrition education; now, therefore, be it

Sec. 1 The Commissioner of Health and Human Services to convene a work group; duties. Resolved: That the Commissioner of Health and Human Services shall convene a work group to perform the following duties with relation to the state-administered federal food supplement program referred to as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP:

1. To examine ways to reduce food insecurity and improve the health of SNAP beneficiaries by increasing access to and the affordability of healthy food options;
2. To increase the effectiveness of projects funded through the federal SNAP nutrition education and other state and federal resources to increase healthy eating demonstration projects and nutrition education strategies;
3. To maximize new opportunities provided by the Federal Government to address the critical problem of obesity, broaden collaborative efforts and provide a wider range of evidence-based intervention strategies focused on low-income persons and families;
4. To identify new opportunities to expand nutrition education and work with food pantries in areas with high concentrations of low-income families; and
5. To maximize opportunities for SNAP participants to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables and other local foods, using incentives that promote healthy purchases; and be it further

Sec. 2 Work group membership. Resolved: That the work group created under section 1 must include nutrition education practitioners; academic and research communities; anti-hunger organizations, food pantries and soup kitchens; nonprofit advocacy organizations representing the interest of low-income citizens of the State; the agricultural community; farmers' markets; and the Department of Health and Human Services, including state SNAP education administrators and the Women, Infants and Children Special Supplemental Food Program staff. The work group must be convened within existing resources; and be it further

Sec. 3 Report and recommendations. Resolved: That the Commissioner of Health and Human Services shall report the findings and recommendations of the work group created under section 1, including, but not limited to, evidence-based strategies to ensure that the State is maximizing educational and other opportunities to incentivize and promote healthy eating and access to healthy food for low-income citizens of the State, to the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services by January 15, 2014.'

SUMMARY

This amendment is the majority report and amends the bill by replacing it with a requirement that the Commissioner of Health and Human Services convene a work group to consider strategies, educational opportunities and other initiatives to reduce food insecurity, promote healthy eating habits and improve access to fresh fruits and vegetables and local foods through farmers' markets and community-supported agriculture by recipients of benefits under the state-administered federal food supplement program known as SNAP. The commissioner is required to report the work group's findings and recommendations to the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services by January 15, 2014.