

HB 535/SB 552: Relating to Transactions in Fresh Produce Markets

What is the purpose of HB 535/SB 552?

The bill will assist families in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) obtain access to healthy food.

- ▶ Specifically, HB 535/SB 552 increases the use of SNAP benefits in farmers markets and other open-air markets.
- ▶ It would allow owners of these open-air markets to allow an authorized Food and Nutrition Service group or association of produce sellers to implement an electronic benefits transfer system for purposes of accepting SNAP benefits in the market on behalf of produce sellers.
- ▶ This bill is not a requirement to accept food stamps at all open-air markets, and it would apply to only foods authorized under SNAP.

Why is HB 535/SB 552 necessary?

Poor nutrition impairs daily health, increases stress, and reduces capacity to work.

- ▶ Food insecurity (defined as difficulty in obtaining enough to eat) increases the risk of diabetes, heart disease, and depression or anxiety in adults, and asthma, cognitive impairment, or behavioral problems in children. SNAP benefits are a tremendous help in reducing these effects.
- ▶ However, low income families often have limited resources and lack of access to healthy, affordable foods. A contributing factor is that healthy food is often more expensive, whereas refined grains, sugars, and fats are generally inexpensive and readily available in low-income communities. Fresh fruits and vegetables have soared in price per calorie over the past 30 years, while soda has fallen dramatically in price.
- ▶ Farmers markets and other open-air markets bring fresh, affordable food to underserved neighborhoods.

Studies have demonstrated that SNAP recipients who shopped at farmers markets consumed vegetables and fruits with more frequency.

- ▶ SNAP recipients who shop at farmers markets consume vegetables an average of 4 times per week more than those who do not shop at farmers markets, regardless of the age, race, gender, or education level of the recipient.
- ▶ In other states, programs to allow the use of food stamps in farmers markets led to a steep increase in their use. More than 70% of SNAP recipients asked reported that the program made them more likely to shop at a farmers market.

How would HB 535/SB 552 help?

HB 535/SB 552 would be a good start to increase nutrition among SNAP recipients by providing additional access to affordable healthy food.

- ▶ Increased nutrition will lead to decreased medical costs due to nutrition-related illnesses, and will improve cognitive and behavioral functioning, especially in children.

Promote healthy eating by voting "YES" on HB 535/SB 552!