

Food Access Legislation for the 85th Session

Background: Food access legislation during the legislative session generally involves initiatives to improve access by increasing locations where healthy food is available, increasing populations eligible for nutrition programs, or making healthier food more affordable. Contrary to that, legislation can also impede access to healthy food by increasing barriers to nutrition programs for certain populations, or by affecting funding available for low-income residents to afford healthier food.

Key committees: House Appropriations; Senate Finance; House Committee on Agriculture and Livestock; Senate Committee on Agriculture, Water, and Rural Affairs; House Human Services; Senate Health and Human Services. Occasionally: House Public Education; Senate Education.

The Good:

HB 1 (House version of budget): Increases the Surplus Agricultural Grant Program to \$10 million from current appropriation of \$5.9 million. This provides surplus produce from Texas farmers to the 21 food banks across the state.

HB 164 (Lucio), HB 1047 (Thierry), SB 723 (Miles), HB 3299 (Thierry), HB 3324 (Rodriguez), SB 2156 (Zaffirini): Provides investments for grocery store improvements and healthy corner stores in food deserts.

HB 1533 (Farrar): Eliminates liquid assets and autos from the asset test for SNAP eligibility. Would place Texas in line with most states who have already eliminated this.

HB 2159 (Giddings): Sets a standard policy for how school districts handle unpaid meal balances.

HB 367 (Bernal), SB 725 (Miles) and SB 755 (Menendez): Allows surplus food from a school district to be donated to a nonprofit.

SB 757 (Menendez)/HB 168 (Lucio III): Recognizes before- and after-school programs that promote healthy eating and physical activity.

SB 1303 (Lucio): Requires a school district SHAC to review policies related to food marketing at a school district.

HB 2355 (Thierry): Provides supports for college students who were previously in the foster care system or are currently homeless, including food assistance.

HB 4022 (Rodriguez): Creates a statewide study on access to healthy foods.

HB 4186 (Raymond): Ensures that if public assistance programs are block-granted, money should still be spent on poverty programs.

Of Concern:

HB 146 (Davis): Requires ID to use a Lone Star Card.

HB 148 (Schaefer)/SB 1443 (Creighton): Requires a photo on a Lone Star Card.

HB 842 (Burrows): Prohibits the purchase of energy drinks, carbonated beverages, sweetened beverages, and certain types of snack foods with SNAP benefits

HB 1126 (Springer): Waives any exemptions from work requirements for SNAP recipients.

HB 3565 (Klick): More evenly distributes SNAP benefits over a 28-day period.

HB 4004 (Tinderholt): Requires income verification for certain school lunch program beneficiaries.

HCR 35 (Metcalf): Urges Congress to limit the types of foods that can be purchased with SNAP.

SB 1308 (Hall): Makes participation in the school breakfast program as well as the free school breakfast provision optional for school districts.

SB 1310 (Hall)/HB 4206 (Swanson): Makes School Health Advisory Councils optional for school districts.

Need More Info:

SB 2124 (Perry): Creates a pilot program at HHSC in which public benefits recipients can participate to gain financial security. Appears to allow for the temporary waiver of program eligibility "impediments" to self-sufficiency (e.g. asset tests) and a three-step process to gaining financial security. The agency has to report out the results at the end of the pilot.



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