

## SB 1585 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

### Senate Committee On Human Services

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**Action Date:** 02/14/24

**Action:** Do pass with amendments. Refer to Ways and Means by prior reference. (Printed A-Eng).

**Vote:** 4-1-0-0

**Yeas:** 4 - Gelser Blouin, Manning Jr, Prozanski, Weber

**Nays:** 1 - Robinson

**Fiscal:** Fiscal impact issued

**Revenue:** No revenue impact

**Prepared By:** Iva Sokolovska, LPRO Analyst

**Meeting Dates:** 2/7, 2/14

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#### WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

The measure creates a task force to create a program that permits Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients have more food choices, including being able to buy hot meals with their benefits. The Department of Human Services (ODHS) will provide the staffing for the task force. ODHS will also create a plan based on the group's findings to let SNAP users use their benefits to buy hot food. The Task Force has to report to the Legislative Assembly on the progress of this program by January 31, 2025. ODHS must notify the Legislative Counsel as soon as they get approval from the federal government for this program. The measure takes effect on the 91st day following adjournment sine die.

#### Detailed Summary:

Establishes the Task Force on Maximizing Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Benefits and specifies its membership. Directs task force to analyze federal funding options to maximize food choices for recipients of SNAP benefits, including using benefits to purchase hot foods. Directs ODHS to provide staff support to the task force. Directs ODHS to develop a plan to implement a program for SNAP recipients to use their benefits to purchase hot foods based on the task force analysis. Directs the task force to report on the implementation of the program to the Legislative Assembly by January 31, 2025. One year after receipt of approval necessary to implement said program, requires ODHS to allow SNAP recipients who lack access to kitchen facilities or a means of preparing meals to use their benefits to purchase hot foods. Directs ODHS to inform the Legislative Counsel immediately after receiving federal approval, denial, or notice of no approval needed. Takes effect on the 91st day following adjournment sine die.

#### ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Provisions of the measure

#### EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

The amendment replaces the measure.

#### BACKGROUND:

The [Restaurant Meals Program \(RMP\)](#) is a choice that states can make to let specific Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) clients buy ready-made meals at restaurants using their SNAP benefits. This option is for people who are not able to cook their own meals or do not have a permanent place to store and prepare food. It has been part of the country's nutrition assistance program since 1977.

To be eligible for the RMP, SNAP clients must be certified for SNAP in a state that has an RMP and all members of the household must be either:

- elderly (60 years of age or older);

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- disabled (receives disability or blindness payments or receives disability retirement benefits from a governmental agency because of a disability considered permanent);
- homeless; or
- a spouse of a SNAP client who is eligible for the RMP.

To participate in the RMP, a restaurant must:

- be in a state that has an RMP;
- get approval from the state and provide a signed agreement to the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS);
- be authorized by FNS to accept SNAP benefits and
- offer meals at discount prices.

In some instances, the program allows beneficiaries to purchase hot, prepared food in the deli sections of participating grocery stores. Participating restaurants should have prominently displayed signage (usually on the front door or window) that says “Participating Restaurant: SNAP Restaurant Meals Program” along with the fork and knife logo. The RMP is managed by individual states, and not every state provides this service. Presently, Arizona, Maryland, New York, California, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Illinois, Michigan, and Virginia have implemented the RMP. Each state has the authority to decide the criteria for selecting restaurants and the number they want to include in their RMP. States interested in joining the SNAP RMP must demonstrate to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that certain groups within their population struggle to access nutritious meals through traditional SNAP benefits.