



General Assembly

January Session, 2025

Raised Bill No. 1418

LCO No. 4910



Referred to Committee on HUMAN SERVICES

Introduced by:
(HS)

AN ACT REDUCING BARRIERS TO FOOD SECURITY.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2025*) (a) There is established an
2 account to be known as the "Connecticut Food Security Fund" which
3 shall be a separate, nonlapsing account within the Grants and Restricted
4 Accounts Fund established pursuant to section 4-31c of the general
5 statutes. The account shall contain any moneys required by law to be
6 deposited in the account. Moneys in the account shall be expended to
7 promote food security efforts in the state in accordance with state law.

8 (b) On and after July 1, 2025, the Commissioner of Revenue Services
9 shall deposit into said account one per cent of the amounts received by
10 the state from the tax imposed on prepared meals under section 12-411
11 of the general statutes.

12 Sec. 2. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2025*) (a) As used in this section, (1)
13 "food security" means access by all state residents at all times to enough
14 nutritionally adequate food for an active, healthy life; (2) "food security
15 hub" means a facility designed to strengthen food security in a

16 geographic region of the state that is equipped with sufficient storage
17 space, refrigeration, transportation and distribution capacity to facilitate
18 the aggregation, storage and distribution of primarily locally grown,
19 nutritionally adequate food; and (3) "food desert" and "nutritionally
20 adequate food" have the same meanings as provided in section 17b-790c
21 of the general statutes.

22 (b) The Commissioner of Agriculture, in consultation with the
23 Connecticut Food Policy Council, the Commissioners of Aging and
24 Disability Services, Social Services and Public Health and the
25 Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity,
26 shall establish a grant program to be funded by the account established
27 pursuant to section 1 of this act for a nonprofit organization or
28 partnership consisting of such organizations to establish or expand food
29 security hubs. The commissioner shall prescribe requirements to apply
30 for the grants and requirements for a grant awardee to document that a
31 grant received under the program was used for its intended purpose.

32 (c) In determining distribution of grant moneys, the commissioner
33 shall give priority to a nonprofit organization or partnership of such
34 organizations with not less than five years experience serving persons
35 located in a food desert.

36 (d) Not later than January 1, 2026, the commissioner shall file a report,
37 in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes,
38 with the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having
39 cognizance of matters relating to aging, appropriations and the budgets
40 of state agencies, the environment, human services and public health.
41 The report shall include, but need not be limited to: (1) The number and
42 average amounts of grants awarded under the program, (2) effects of
43 the grants on food security, (3) the organizations or partnerships of
44 organizations that received such grants, (4) whether the Connecticut
45 Food Security Fund established pursuant to section 1 of this act is
46 sufficient to support food security in the state, and (5) recommendations
47 on other uses for the fund to support food security in the state,

48 including, but not limited to, expanding access to the Food System
49 Capacity Building Grant administered by the Department of
50 Agriculture on behalf of the Connecticut Food Policy Council
51 established pursuant to section 22-456 of the general statutes.

52 Sec. 3. Section 10-215 of the general statutes is repealed and the
53 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2025*):

54 (a) [Any] Each local [or] and regional board of education [may] shall
55 establish and operate a school lunch program for public school children,
56 may operate lunch services for its employees, may establish and operate
57 a school breakfast program, as provided under federal laws governing
58 said programs, or may establish and operate such other child feeding
59 programs as it deems necessary. [Charges] No board may charge for
60 such school lunches, school breakfasts or other such child feeding. [may
61 be fixed by such boards and shall not exceed the cost of food, wages and
62 other expenses directly incurred in providing such services.] When such
63 [services] programs are offered, a board shall provide free school
64 lunches, school breakfasts or other such child feeding to [children whose
65 economic needs require such action under the standards promulgated
66 by said federal laws] all students. Such board is authorized to purchase
67 equipment and supplies that are necessary, to employ the necessary
68 personnel, to utilize the services of volunteers and to receive and expend
69 any funds and receive and use any equipment and supplies which may
70 become available to carry out the provisions of this section. Any town
71 board of education may vote to designate any volunteer organization
72 within the town to provide a school lunch program, school breakfast
73 program or other child feeding program in accordance with the
74 provisions of this section.

75 [(b) For the school year commencing July 1, 2021, and each school
76 year thereafter, a local or regional board of education shall include in
77 any policy or procedure for the collection of unpaid charges for school
78 lunches, breakfasts or other such feeding applicable to employees and
79 third-party vendors of such school lunches, breakfasts or such feeding

(1) a prohibition on publicly identifying or shaming a child for any such unpaid charges, including, but not limited to, delaying or refusing to serve a meal to such child, designating a specific meal option for such child or otherwise taking any disciplinary action against such child, (2) a declaration of the right for any child to purchase a meal, which meal may exclude any a la carte items or be limited to one meal for any school lunch, breakfast or other such feeding, and (3) a procedure for communicating with the parent or legal guardian of a child for the purpose of collecting such unpaid charges. Such communication shall include, but not be limited to, (A) information regarding local food pantries, (B) applications for the school district's program for free or reduced priced meals and for the supplemental nutrition assistance program administered by the Department of Social Services, and (C) a link to the Internet web site maintained by the town for such school district listing any community services available to the residents of such town. In the event the unpaid charges for school lunches, breakfasts or other such feeding due from any parent or legal guardian are equal to or more than the cost of thirty meals, the local or regional board of education shall refer such parent or legal guardian to the local homeless education liaison designated by such board, pursuant to Subtitle B of Title VII of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 42 USC 11431 et seq., as amended from time to time.]

[(c)] (b) A local or regional board of education may accept gifts, donations or grants from any public or private sources for the purpose of [paying off any unpaid charges for] providing such school lunches, school breakfasts or other such child feeding.

Sec. 4. Section 10-215b of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2025*):

(a) The State Board of Education [is authorized to expend in each fiscal year, within available appropriations,] shall annually provide grants to local and regional boards of education, the Technical Education and Career System and the governing authority of a state

112 charter school, interdistrict magnet school or endowed academy
 113 approved pursuant to section 10-34 that participates in the National
 114 School Lunch Program and operates a school lunch program, school
 115 breakfast program or other child feeding program pursuant to section
 116 10-215, as amended by this act, provided the state board expends in each
 117 fiscal year an amount equal to (1) the money required pursuant to the
 118 matching requirements of said federal laws and shall disburse the same
 119 in accordance with said laws, and (2) at least ten cents per lunch served
 120 in the prior school year in accordance with said laws. [by any local or
 121 regional board of education, the Technical Education and Career System
 122 or governing authority of a state charter school, interdistrict magnet
 123 school or endowed academy approved pursuant to section 10-34 that
 124 participates in the National School Lunch Program and certifies] Each
 125 such board, system and governing authority shall certify, pursuant to
 126 section 10-215f, that the nutrition standards established by the
 127 Department of Education, pursuant to section 10-215e, [shall be] have
 128 been met.

129 (b) The State Board of Education shall prescribe the manner and time
 130 of application by such board of education, the Technical Education and
 131 Career System, such governing authority or controlling authority of the
 132 nonpublic schools for such funds, provided such application shall
 133 include the certification that any funds received pursuant to subsection
 134 (a) of this section shall be used for the program approved. The State
 135 Board of Education shall determine the eligibility of the applicant to
 136 receive such grants pursuant to regulations provided in subsection (c)
 137 of this section and shall certify to the Comptroller the amount of the
 138 grant for which the board of education, the Technical Education and
 139 Career System, the governing authority or the controlling authority of a
 140 nonpublic school is eligible. Upon receipt of such certification, the
 141 Comptroller shall draw an order on the Treasurer in the amount, at the
 142 time and to the payee so certified.

143 (c) The State Board of Education may adopt such regulations as may
 144 be necessary in implementing sections 10-215 to 10-215b, inclusive, as

145 amended by this act.

146 (d) The Commissioner of Education shall establish a procedure for
147 monitoring compliance by boards of education, the Technical Education
148 and Career System, or governing authorities with certifications
149 submitted in accordance with section 10-215f and may adjust grant
150 amounts pursuant to [subdivision (2) of] subsection (a) of this section
151 based on failure to comply with [said] such certification.

152 (e) The Commissioner of Education may temporarily waive any
153 provision or modify any requirements of this section or section 10-215,
154 as amended by this act, 10-215a, 10-215e or 10-215f, in response to any
155 changes in federal law or waivers issued by the United States
156 Department of Agriculture, to ensure that local and regional boards of
157 education continue to receive the funds described in this section.

158 Sec. 5. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2025*) (a) As used in this section, "food
159 as medicine" has the same meaning as provided in section 17b-790c of
160 the general statutes. The Commissioner of Social Services shall apply for
161 a Medicaid waiver under Section 1115 of the Social Security Act to
162 provide Medicaid coverage for food as medicine.

163 (b) Not later than January 1, 2026, the commissioner shall file a report,
164 in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes,
165 with the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having
166 cognizance of matters relating to human services and public health on
167 the number of Medicaid beneficiaries receiving food as medicine and
168 any available data on the effect of food as medicine on the chronic health
169 conditions of such beneficiaries.

170 Sec. 6. Section 17b-105a of the general statutes is amended by adding
171 subsections (e) and (f) as follows (*Effective July 1, 2025*):

172 (NEW) (e) The Commissioner of Social Services shall, within
173 available appropriations, increase the minimum monthly supplemental
174 nutrition assistance benefit to ninety-five dollars.

(NEW) (f) Not later than September 1, 2025, the Commissioner of Social Services, in consultation with the Commissioner of Agriculture, shall, within available appropriations, establish a healthy food incentive program under which supplemental nutrition assistance beneficiaries, who purchase fresh produce at certified farmers' markets, shall be credited one dollar in supplemental nutrition assistance benefits for every one dollar they spend on such purchases, provided the credit shall not exceed fifty dollars monthly. For purposes of this subsection, "fresh produce" and "certified farmers' market" have the same meanings as provided in section 22-6r.

Sec. 7. Section 17b-791 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2025*):

(a) The Department of Social Services shall establish a supplemental nutrition commodities assistance program to provide funds for the purchase of produce, high protein foods or other nutritionally beneficial supplemental foods [, or both,] for soup kitchens, food pantries and emergency shelters. Such foods shall be purchased in bulk by [the Connecticut Food Bank] Connecticut Foodshare through in-state wholesalers or brokers, or both, and allotted to existing soup kitchens, food pantries and emergency shelters in accordance with the established policies of [the Connecticut Food Bank] Connecticut Foodshare.

(b) At least fifteen per cent of funds appropriated for the program shall be used in each fiscal year to purchase produce or other products from Connecticut farmers. Within available appropriations, funds appropriated for the program shall be increased not less than three per cent each fiscal year beginning July 1, 2026. Such soup kitchens, food pantries and emergency shelters [shall pay] may be charged a handling [charge of] fee of up to five cents per pound in order to cover the costs incurred by [the Connecticut Food Bank] Connecticut Foodshare. The food shall be distributed free of charge by the soup kitchens, food pantries and emergency shelters.

206 Sec. 8. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) As used in this section, (1)
 207 "Restaurant Meals Program" means a United States Department of
 208 Agriculture program that allows an eligible supplemental nutrition
 209 assistance program beneficiary to purchase meals at participating
 210 restaurants with their benefits, and (2) "eligible beneficiary" means a
 211 supplemental nutrition assistance program beneficiary who is sixty
 212 years of age or older, disabled, homeless or the spouse of an eligible
 213 supplemental nutrition assistance program beneficiary.

214 (b) The Commissioner of Social Services shall develop a plan to
 215 participate in the Restaurant Meals Program that offers a variety of
 216 restaurant choices and healthy meal options throughout the state for an
 217 eligible beneficiary. Not later than October 1, 2025, the commissioner
 218 shall file a report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of
 219 the general statutes, on the plan with the joint standing committees of
 220 the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to aging,
 221 the environment, human services and public health. The commissioner
 222 shall submit a formal application for state participation in the plan with
 223 the United States Department of Agriculture not later than December 1,
 224 2025.

225 Sec. 9. (*Effective July 1, 2025*) The sum of ten million dollars is
 226 appropriated to the Department of Social Services from the General
 227 Fund, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2026, for the supplemental
 228 nutrition commodities assistance program established pursuant to
 229 section 17b-791 of the general statutes, as amended by this act.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:

Section 1	<i>July 1, 2025</i>	New section
Sec. 2	<i>July 1, 2025</i>	New section
Sec. 3	<i>July 1, 2025</i>	10-215
Sec. 4	<i>July 1, 2025</i>	10-215b
Sec. 5	<i>July 1, 2025</i>	New section
Sec. 6	<i>July 1, 2025</i>	17b-105a(e) and (f)

Sec. 7	<i>July 1, 2025</i>	17b-791
Sec. 8	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 9	<i>July 1, 2025</i>	New section

Statement of Purpose:

To maximize state and federal resources to reduce barriers to food security.

[Proposed deletions are enclosed in brackets. Proposed additions are indicated by underline, except that when the entire text of a bill or resolution or a section of a bill or resolution is new, it is not underlined.]