

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 344
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Agriculture & Rural Affairs
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Low-income children are more likely to become obese, putting them at risk for chronic diseases such as diabetes. A lack of fresh fruits and vegetables exacerbates their increased risk of becoming obese. While the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) [formerly the food stamp program] as well as Women, Infants, and Children's (WIC) benefits are technically allowed at farmers markets, few vendors or clients are aware of this option, and most vendors do not have the technology to enable them to accept the electronic Lone Star Card benefits. The federal government does not prohibit WIC benefits from being accepted at farmers markets, but only one vendor in Texas currently accepts them.

As proposed, S.B. 344 establishes an advisory committee to study and make recommendations to the legislature regarding the costs, benefits, feasibility, acceptance and use of food stamps and WIC program benefits at Texas farmers markets.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. ESTABLISHMENT OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE. (a) Defines "farmers market," "food stamp program," and "W.I.C. program."

(b) Requires the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission (executive commissioner) and the commissioner of the Department of Agriculture (commissioner) to jointly establish an advisory committee to study and provide recommendations to the legislature regarding the acceptance and use of food stamps and W.I.C. program benefits at farmers markets in the state.

(c) Provides that the advisory committee consists of nine members and requires that the commissioner and the executive commissioner appoint persons who represent certain groups and entities.

(d) Provides that an advisory committee member is not entitled to reimbursement of expenses or to compensation.

(e) Requires the advisory committee to meet within 30 days after the date the initial appointments have been made and to select a presiding officer. Requires the committee to meet regularly as necessary.

(f) Requires the advisory committee to study certain topics and perform certain functions.

(g) Requires the Department of Agriculture to provide administrative support, including staff, for the advisory committee.

(h) Requires the advisory committee, not later than September 1, 2010, to submit to the legislature a report outlining the costs, benefits, and feasibility of providing food stamp

and W.I.C. program participants with the ability to use program benefits at farmers markets to purchase fresh produce.

SECTION 2. INAPPLICABILITY OF CERTAIN LAW. Provides that Chapter 2110 (State Agency Advisory Committees), Government Code, does not apply to the advisory committee established under this Act.

SECTION 3. EXPIRATION. Provides that the advisory committee established under this Act is abolished and this Act expires September 1, 2011.

SECTION 4. EFFECTIVE DATE: upon passage or September 1, 2009.