

By: Rodriguez of Travis

H.B. No. 1616

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the establishment of a pilot program for the purchase of produce at farmers markets under certain nutritional assistance programs.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Title 2, Agriculture Code, is amended by adding Chapter 15A to read as follows:

CHAPTER 15A. "DOUBLE DOLLARS" PILOT PROGRAM

Sec. 15A.001. DEFINITIONS. In this chapter:

(1) "Farmers market" means a location at which a group of two or more farmers who are certified under the department's farmers market certification program offer produce for retail sale.

(2) "Food desert" means a census tract, based on the most recent information published by the United States Bureau of the Census, in which:

(A) the poverty rate is 20 percent or higher or the median family income is at or below 80 percent of the area median family income; and

(B) at least 500 people or at least 33 percent of the census area's population reside more than:

(i) one mile from a grocery store, in the case of a census tract other than a rural census tract; or

(ii) 10 miles from a grocery store, in the case of a rural census tract.

1 (3) "Nutritional assistance program" means the
2 supplemental nutrition assistance program and the special
3 supplemental nutrition program for women, infants, and children.

4 (4) "Pilot program" means the "Double Dollars" pilot
5 program established under this chapter.

6 (5) "Produce" means fresh fruits or vegetables.

7 Sec. 15A.002. ESTABLISHMENT OF PILOT PROGRAM. (a) The
8 department shall develop and implement a pilot program to create a
9 "Double Dollars" program that, to the extent allowed by federal
10 law, provides an increase in the value of nutritional assistance
11 program benefits to a recipient of the benefits who resides in an
12 area included in the pilot program.

13 (b) The pilot program must be operated in an area that is
14 located in or accessible to one or more areas designated by the
15 department as food deserts.

16 Sec. 15A.003. ADDITIONAL NUTRITIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
17 BENEFIT. The pilot program must be designed to increase the
18 allowable weekly benefit for the purchase of produce by \$1 for every
19 \$1 used by a nutritional assistance program recipient to purchase
20 produce at a farmers market, with a total benefit value not to
21 exceed \$20 a week for each nutritional assistance program from
22 which a recipient receives benefits.

23 Sec. 15A.004. ASSISTANCE WITH DEVELOPMENT AND
24 IMPLEMENTATION. (a) In designing and implementing the pilot
25 program, the department shall:

26 (1) collaborate and coordinate with the Health and
27 Human Services Commission and the Department of State Health

1 Services as necessary to provide the program benefit described by
2 Section 15A.003; and

3 (2) study the operation and design of existing double
4 dollars programs in this state, collaborate with the persons
5 operating those programs, and use those programs as models for the
6 pilot program.

7 (b) To implement the pilot program, the department may:

8 (1) seek, accept, and spend funds received through
9 grants or donations from public or private sources;

10 (2) develop partnerships with persons, including
11 public and private entities, located in the areas served by the
12 pilot program; and

13 (3) develop partnerships with persons, including
14 public and private entities, in the state who have experience
15 operating double dollars programs for the purpose of developing
16 training and obtaining technical assistance for the pilot program.

17 Sec. 15A.005. EXPIRATION. This chapter expires September
18 1, 2017.

19 SECTION 2. The change in law made by this Act applies only
20 to supplemental nutrition assistance program and special
21 supplemental nutrition program for women, infants, and children
22 benefits distributed on or after the effective date of this Act.
23 Benefits distributed before the effective date of this Act are
24 governed by the law as it existed on the date the distribution was
25 made, and the former law is continued in effect for that purpose.

26 SECTION 3. If before implementing any provision of this Act
27 a state agency determines that a waiver or authorization from a

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1 federal agency is necessary for implementation of that provision,
2 the agency affected by the provision shall request the waiver or
3 authorization and may delay implementing that provision until the
4 waiver or authorization is granted.

5 SECTION 4. This Act takes effect September 1, 2015.