



General Assembly

February Session, 2026

Substitute Bill No. 497



**AN ACT PROVIDING FOOD SECURITY FOR VETERANS,
TRANSITIONAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE FOR OTHER PERSONS
AFFECTED BY FEDERAL PROGRAM CUTS, A FOOD AS MEDICINE
WAIVER PROGRAM, MEALS ON WHEELS PROVIDER RATE
INCREASES AND ALIGNING NUTRITION ASSISTANCE
APPLICATIONS WITH FEDERAL REGULATIONS.**

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

1 Section 1. (*Effective July 1, 2026*) There is established an account to be
2 known as the supplemental nutrition assistance transitional benefit
3 account, which shall be a separate, nonlapsing account. The account
4 shall contain any moneys required by law to be deposited in the account.
5 Moneys in the account shall be expended by the Department of Social
6 Services solely for the purposes of operating the Supplemental
7 Nutrition Assistance Transitional Benefit Program established pursuant
8 to section 4 of this act.

9 Sec. 2. (*Effective July 1, 2026*) Notwithstanding the provisions of
10 sections 3 and 4 of special act 26-1, for the fiscal year ending June 30,
11 2027, the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management shall transfer
12 forty million dollars from the Federal Cuts Response Fund, established
13 pursuant to section 1 of special act 26-1, to the supplemental nutrition
14 assistance transitional benefit account established pursuant to section 1
15 of this act.

16 Sec. 3. Section 17b-105a of the general statutes is repealed and the

17 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026*):

18 (a) The Commissioner of Social Services shall seek a waiver from
19 federal law to allow persons who live in an area in which (1) the
20 unemployment rate is greater than ten per cent, or (2) there is an
21 insufficient number of jobs to provide such persons with employment,
22 to be exempt from the three-month participation limit of the
23 supplemental nutrition assistance program implemented pursuant to
24 the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008.

25 (b) The Commissioner of Social Services shall implement vehicle
26 evaluation provisions in accordance with 7 CFR 273.8(f)(4).

27 (c) The Commissioner of Social Services, pursuant to 7 USC
28 2014(e)(6), shall implement the federal option to mandate the use of a
29 standard utility allowance, to be used in place of actual utility costs, for
30 purposes of calculating the excess shelter deduction of applicants for, or
31 recipients of, supplemental nutrition assistance program benefits.
32 Pursuant to 7 USC 2014(e)(6)(C)(iii)(III), the commissioner shall not
33 prorate a standard utility allowance based upon the fact that an assisted
34 household shares the utility with an individual who is not a member of
35 the assisted household.

36 (d) Not later than December 31, 2024, the Commissioner of Social
37 Services shall enter into a contract with an outside vendor to update the
38 system utilized by the Department of Social Services to administer the
39 supplemental nutrition assistance program for the purpose of enabling
40 the department to stagger the distribution of program benefits so that
41 benefits are distributed, in accordance with federal law, to cohorts of
42 program beneficiaries designated by the commissioner at multiple
43 intervals during each month. Not later than March 1, 2026, the
44 commissioner shall commence staggering the distribution of such
45 benefits to such cohorts of beneficiaries each month, in accordance with
46 federal law. Not later than April 1, 2026, and annually thereafter, the
47 commissioner shall report, in accordance with the provisions of section
48 11-4a, to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having

49 cognizance of matters relating to human services regarding the
50 staggering of distribution benefits pursuant to this subsection.

51 (e) The Commissioner of Social Services shall provide a veteran, as
52 defined in section 27-103, with the same level of supplemental nutrition
53 assistance program benefits such otherwise eligible veteran received or
54 would have received before federal work requirements for the program
55 were changed pursuant to P.L. 119-21, irrespective of whether such
56 veteran is able to meet such work requirements.

57 Sec. 4. (*Effective July 1, 2026*) (a) As used in this section, "vulnerable
58 person" includes, but is not limited to, (1) a homeless person or person
59 at risk of homelessness, (2) an adult diagnosed with autism spectrum
60 disorder who is not otherwise classified as disabled, (3) a young adult
61 aging out of the foster care system, (4) an adult who is a caretaker for a
62 child between the ages of fourteen and eighteen, (5) a person age fifty-
63 five to sixty-four, inclusive, and (6) an asylee, refugee or other
64 immigrant with a visa or pending visa based on such immigrant's status
65 as a victim of human trafficking or domestic violence.

66 (b) The Commissioner of Social Services shall establish a
67 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Transitional Benefit Program for
68 vulnerable persons at risk of losing supplemental nutrition assistance
69 pursuant to changes in federal work requirements and eligibility under
70 P.L. 119-21. Such assistance shall include (1) benefits of not less than one
71 hundred ninety-four dollars per month for a period of not more than
72 twelve months, (2) access to job training, and (3) case management to
73 help document compliance by otherwise eligible vulnerable persons
74 with work requirements or eligibility for federal exemptions to the work
75 requirements.

76 (c) In implementing the program, the Commissioner of Social
77 Services shall:

78 (1) Inform program beneficiaries about the work requirements and
79 other eligibility changes;

80 (2) In consultation with the Labor Commissioner, provide vulnerable
81 persons with access to job training programs;

82 (3) Implement systems to verify work hours, potential federal
83 exemptions from the requirements and documentation from vulnerable
84 persons subject to the new work requirements;

85 (4) Identify and assist vulnerable persons with unstable employment
86 or health barriers; and

87 (5) Expeditiously resolve eligibility issues to prevent prolonged
88 benefit loss.

89 (d) A vulnerable person shall be eligible for transitional assistance
90 under the program if such person (1) is described in subdivisions (1) to
91 (5), inclusive, of subsection (a) of this section and is (A) working, (B)
92 enrolled in a workforce program, (C) demonstrating an active job search
93 in accordance with requirements prescribed by the Commissioner of
94 Social Services, or (D) awaiting verification or documentation of (i)
95 meeting the work requirements, or (ii) qualifying for a federal
96 exemption from the work requirements, or (2) is an asylee, refugee or
97 other immigrant described in subdivision (6) of subsection (a) of this
98 section. A vulnerable person otherwise eligible for the supplemental
99 nutrition assistance program shall be required to reenroll in the program
100 once such person is able to complete the work requirements.

101 (e) The Commissioner of Social Services, to the extent permissible
102 under federal law, shall limit the lookback period for compliance with
103 federal work requirements for the supplemental nutrition assistance
104 program to one month and may accept (1) written income verification
105 from a vulnerable person's employer if such person is paid in cash, or
106 (2) self-attested information from a vulnerable person experiencing
107 homelessness.

108 Sec. 5. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) As used in this section, (1)
109 "food as medicine" has the same meaning as provided in section 17b-
110 790c of the general statutes, (2) "chronic health conditions" means

111 conditions that include, but are not limited to, prediabetes, gestational
112 diabetes and types 1 and 2 diabetes, heart disease, including
113 hypertension, hypercholesterol, dyslipidemia and congestive heart
114 failure, food allergies, celiac disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary
115 disease, renal disease and obesity, (3) "health care provider" means a
116 physician, physician assistant, advanced practice registered nurse,
117 certified dietitian-nutritionist or certified diabetes educator licensed or
118 certified to practice in the state, and (4) "produce prescription" means a
119 prescription for fruits and vegetables without added salt, sugar or fat
120 given to a Medicaid beneficiary with chronic health conditions by a
121 health care provider.

122 (b) Not later than October 1, 2026, the Commissioner of Social
123 Services shall seek federal approval for a Medicaid waiver under Section
124 1115 of the Social Security Act for a three-year pilot program to provide
125 produce prescriptions and nutritional counseling under a food as
126 medicine program for Medicaid beneficiaries with chronic health
127 conditions. The commissioner may provide such beneficiary with
128 vouchers or an electronic debit card restricted to the purchase of a
129 produce prescription.

130 (c) Not later than January 15, 2027, January 15, 2028, and January 15,
131 2029, the commissioner shall file an annual report, in accordance with
132 the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, with the joint
133 standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of
134 matters relating to human services on (1) the number of Medicaid
135 beneficiaries who have received produce prescriptions under the pilot
136 program, (2) data regarding the effect produce prescriptions have on the
137 health of such beneficiaries, including, but not limited to, indicators
138 such as blood sugar levels, blood pressure and serum lipids, (3) the
139 effect of the pilot program on ranges of food insecurity, as measured by
140 the United States Department of Agriculture, and (4) the cost to the state
141 to provide Medicaid reimbursement for such prescriptions compared to
142 any savings generated by improved health outcomes for such enrollees.
143 The commissioner shall share aggregated data on food insecurity
144 among pilot program participants with organizations that track data on

145 food insecurity and connect food insecure persons with nutritional
146 assistance.

147 Sec. 6. Section 17b-112d of the general statutes is repealed and the
148 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026*):

149 A person convicted of any offense under federal or state law, on or
150 after August 22, 1996, which (1) is classified as a felony, and (2) has as
151 an element the possession, use or distribution of a controlled substance,
152 as defined in Subsection (6) of 21 USC 802, shall be eligible for benefits
153 pursuant to the temporary assistance for needy families program or the
154 supplemental nutrition assistance program pursuant to the Food and
155 Nutrition Act of 2008, if such person has completed a sentence imposed
156 by a court. A person shall also be eligible for said benefits if such person
157 is [satisfactorily] serving a sentence of a period of probation or is in the
158 process of completing or has completed a sentence imposed by the court
159 of mandatory participation in a substance abuse treatment program or
160 mandatory participation in a substance abuse testing program.

161 Sec. 7. Section 17b-105c of the general statutes is repealed and the
162 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026*):

163 The Commissioner of Social Services, in accordance with federal law,
164 may implement policy to simplify program administration and increase
165 payment accuracy in the supplemental nutrition assistance program,
166 while in the process of adopting such policy as regulation, provided
167 notice of such policy is published in the Connecticut Law Journal within
168 twenty days of implementation. The commissioner shall align
169 applications for federal supplemental nutrition assistance with 7 CFR
170 273.11(n) and remove any requirement that an applicant attest that such
171 applicant does not have a probation or parole violation.

172 Sec. 8. Section 17b-343 of the general statutes is repealed and the
173 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026*):

174 The Commissioner of Social Services shall establish annually the
175 maximum allowable rate to be paid by agencies for homemaker

176 services, chore person services, companion services, respite care, meals
177 on wheels, adult day care services, case management and assessment
178 services, transportation, mental health counseling and elderly foster
179 care. The Commissioner of Social Services shall prescribe uniform forms
180 on which agencies providing such services shall report their costs for
181 such services. Such rates shall be determined on the basis of a reasonable
182 payment for necessary services rendered. The maximum allowable rates
183 established by the Commissioner of Social Services for the Connecticut
184 home-care program for the elderly established under section 17b-342
185 shall constitute the rates required under this section until revised in
186 accordance with this section. The Commissioner of Social Services shall
187 establish a fee schedule, to be effective on and after July 1, 1994, for
188 homemaker services, chore person services, companion services, respite
189 care, meals on wheels, adult day care services, case management and
190 assessment services, transportation, mental health counseling and
191 elderly foster care. The commissioner may annually increase the fee
192 schedule based on an increase in the cost of services. The commissioner
193 shall increase the fee schedule effective July 1, 2000, by not less than five
194 per cent, for adult day care services. The commissioner shall increase the
195 fee schedule effective July 1, 2011, by four dollars per person, per day
196 for adult day care services. The commissioner shall increase the fee
197 schedule effective July 1, 2019, for meals on wheels by ten per cent over
198 the fee schedule for meals on wheels for the previous fiscal year.
199 Effective July 1, [2020] 2026, and annually thereafter, the commissioner
200 [may] shall increase the fee schedule for meals on wheels providers
201 serving participants in the Connecticut home-care program for the
202 elderly by, at a minimum, the cost-of-living adjustment as measured by
203 the consumer price index. The commissioner may increase any fee
204 payable to a meals on wheels provider upon the application of such
205 provider evidencing extraordinary costs related to delivery of meals on
206 wheels in sparsely populated rural regions of the state. Nothing
207 contained in this section shall authorize a payment by the state to any
208 agency for such services in excess of the amount charged by such agency
209 for such services to the general public.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 2	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 3	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	17b-105a
Sec. 4	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 5	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 6	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	17b-112d
Sec. 7	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	17b-105c
Sec. 8	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	17b-343

Statement of Legislative Commissioners:

The title was changed; in Section 4(c) "commissioner" was changed to "Commissioner of Social Services" for clarity and Section 4(d) was redrafted for clarity.

HS *Joint Favorable Subst. -LCO*