
OLR Bill Analysis

sSB 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.

SUMMARY

This bill makes several changes to laws affecting nutritional assistance programs, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Principally, it:

1. establishes the SNAP transitional benefit account and transfers \$40 million dollars to the account from the Federal Cuts Response Fund (§§ 1 & 2);
2. requires the Department of Social Services (DSS) to establish a SNAP Transitional Benefit Program to help certain people at risk of losing benefits under P.L. 119-21 (see below) (§ 4);
3. requires DSS to give veterans the same level of SNAP benefits as they would have received before P.L. 119-21 (§ 3);
4. requires DSS to seek a Medicaid waiver for a three-year pilot program to give produce prescriptions (certain prescriptions for fruits and vegetables) and nutritional counseling to Medicaid enrollees with chronic health conditions (§ 5);
5. removes a requirement that people serving a probation sentence be doing so “satisfactorily” to qualify for SNAP or Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) benefits and requires DSS to eliminate requirements on SNAP applications for applicants to attest that they do not have a probation or parole violation (§§ 6 & 7); and

6. requires, rather than allows, DSS to annually increase meals-on-wheels provider rates for the Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders (CHCPE) (§ 8).

P.L. 119-21, the federal FY 25 Reconciliation Law (commonly referred to as H.R. 1 or the One Big Beautiful Bill Act) included several provisions affecting SNAP, including expanding SNAP work requirements, and making certain immigrant groups ineligible for the program.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026, except the food as medicine provision is effective upon passage.

§§ 1, 2, & 4 — SNAP TRANSITIONAL BENEFITS

SNAP Transitional Benefit Account

The bill establishes the SNAP transitional benefit account as a separate, nonlapsing account and requires DSS to spend funds in the account to operate the SNAP Transitional Benefit Program the bill establishes.

The bill requires the Office of Policy and Management to transfer \$40 million from the Federal Cuts Response Fund to the SNAP transitional benefit account for FY 27.

Program Eligibility

The bill requires DSS to establish a SNAP Transitional Benefit Program for vulnerable people at risk of losing SNAP due to changes in federal work requirements and eligibility under P.L. 119-21. Under the bill, a “vulnerable person” includes:

1. a homeless person or someone at risk of homelessness;
2. an adult diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder who is not otherwise classified as disabled;
3. a young adult aging out of the foster care system;
4. an adult who is a caretaker for a child between the ages of 14 and 18;

5. a person aged 55 to 64 years; and
6. an asylee, refugee, or other immigrant with a visa or pending visa based on human trafficking or domestic violence victim status.

The bill generally makes vulnerable persons eligible for transitional assistance under the program, but it sets additional requirements for certain vulnerable persons to be eligible for this assistance. Specifically, other than asylees, refugees, and immigrants with victim status, the bill requires vulnerable persons to be:

1. working or enrolled in a workforce program,
2. demonstrating an active job search consistent with DSS requirements, or
3. awaiting verification or documentation of work requirements or federal exemption from them.

The bill requires a vulnerable person to re-enroll in SNAP once he or she is able to complete the work-related requirements.

Program Benefits

SNAP transitional benefits must include:

1. at least \$194 per month for up to 12 months,
2. access to job training, and
3. case management to help an otherwise eligible vulnerable person document compliance with work requirements or eligibility for federal exemptions to work requirements.

Program Implementation

The bill requires DSS, when implementing the program, to:

1. inform program beneficiaries about work requirements and other eligibility changes;
2. provide, in consultation with the labor commissioner, access to

- job training programs for vulnerable people;
3. implement systems to verify work hours, potential federal exemptions from requirements, and documentation from vulnerable people subject to the new work requirements;
 4. identify and help vulnerable people with unstable employment or health barriers; and
 5. expeditiously resolve eligibility issues to prevent prolonged benefit loss.

SNAP Program Work Requirements

To the extent federal law allows, the bill requires the DSS commissioner to limit to one month the lookback period for federal work requirement compliance. It allows her to accept (1) written income verification from a vulnerable person's employer if the person is paid in cash or (2) self-attested information from a vulnerable person experiencing homelessness.

§ 3 — NUTRITIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR VETERANS

The bill requires the DSS commissioner to give veterans the same level of SNAP benefits as they received or would have received before P.L 119-21 changed SNAP work requirements. The bill requires DSS to provide this assistance irrespective of whether the veteran meets work requirements. (Presumably, if the veteran meets federal work requirements, benefits are provided under the federal SNAP program. The bill does not specify a program or funding source for benefits if the veteran does not meet federal work requirements.)

By law, a veteran is any person who was discharged or released under conditions that were not dishonorable from active service in the armed forces.

§ 5 — FOOD AS MEDICINE PILOT PROGRAM

The bill requires DSS to seek a federal § 1115 Medicaid demonstration waiver for a three-year pilot food as medicine program for Medicaid enrollees with chronic health conditions.

Pilot Program Eligibility

The bill requires the pilot program to provide services to Medicaid enrollees with chronic health conditions, which include:

1. prediabetes, gestational diabetes, and types 1 and 2 diabetes;
2. heart disease, including hypertension, hyper-cholesterol, dyslipidemia, and congestive heart failure;
3. food allergies;
4. celiac disease;
5. chronic obstructive pulmonary disease;
6. renal disease; and
7. obesity.

Pilot Program Benefits

Under the bill, the program provides produce prescriptions and nutritional counseling. “Produce prescriptions” are a prescription for fruits and vegetables without added salt, sugar, or fat given to a Medicaid beneficiary with chronic health conditions by a health care provider (a physician, physician’s assistant, APRN, certified dietitian-nutritionist, or certified diabetes educator).

The bill authorizes DSS to give the pilot program participants vouchers or electronic debit cards restricted to produce prescription purchases.

Reporting and Data Sharing

The bill requires DSS to submit three annual reports to the Human Services Committee, due on January 15 in 2027, 2028, and 2029. The reports must include:

1. how many Medicaid enrollees received produce prescriptions under the pilot program;
2. data on the effect the prescriptions had on Medicaid enrollees’

health, including indicators such as blood sugar levels, blood pressure, and serum lipids;

3. the pilot program's effect on food insecurity ranges, as measured by the United States Department of Agriculture; and
4. state costs to provide Medicaid reimbursement for produce prescriptions, compared to any savings generated by participants' improved health outcomes.

The bill requires DSS to share aggregated data on pilot program participant food insecurity with organizations that track data on food security and connect people who are food insecure to nutritional assistance.

§§ 6 & 7 — PROBATION COMPLETION AND PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

By law, people convicted of certain state and federal felony offenses are generally eligible for SNAP and TFA benefits if they have completed their court sentence. Under current law, if the person is serving a period of probation as part of their sentence and is doing so satisfactorily, he or she is eligible for SNAP and TFA benefits. The bill removes the requirement that people on probation be serving "satisfactorily" in order to qualify for benefits.

The bill also requires the DSS commissioner to remove any requirement that a SNAP applicant attest that he or she does not have a probation or parole violation on the SNAP application.

Additionally, the bill requires DSS to align applications with federal regulations excluding probation or parole violators from SNAP eligible households. Under these regulations, to be considered a probation or parole violator, a state-designated impartial party must determine that the person violated a state or federal probation or parole condition, or local law enforcement authorities are actively seeking the person to enforce probation or parole conditions. The state must continue to process a SNAP application while awaiting verification of probation or parole violator status (7 C.F.R. § 273.11).

§ 8 — CHCPE MEALS-ON-WHEELS RATES

Starting July 1, 2026, the bill requires, rather than allows, the DSS commissioner to annually increase the fee schedule for meals-on-wheels providers in CHCPE. Under existing law, unchanged by the bill, any annual increase to the fee schedule must be by at least the cost-of-living adjustment as measured by the consumer price index.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Human Services Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 15 Nay 8 (03/19/2026)