

**SENATE, No. 3945**

**STATE OF NEW JERSEY**  
**219th LEGISLATURE**

INTRODUCED JUNE 10, 2021

**Sponsored by:**

**Senator JOSEPH F. VITALE**

**District 19 (Middlesex)**

**Senator FRED H. MADDEN, JR.**

**District 4 (Camden and Gloucester)**

**SYNOPSIS**

Establishes Office of Food Insecurity Advocate.

**CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT**

As introduced.



1 AN ACT establishing the Office of Food Insecurity Advocate and  
2 supplementing Title 52 of the Revised Statutes.

3

4 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*  
5 *of New Jersey:*

6

7 1. The Legislature finds and declares that:

8 (a) Over one million people are estimated to be food insecure in  
9 New Jersey and more than one-third of them are children;

10 (b) The coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic is projected to cause  
11 a disproportionate increase in the rate of food insecurity in this  
12 State compared to the national rate and neighboring states;

13 (c) Several departments are responsible for administering  
14 different food insecurity programs in the State: the Department of  
15 Human Services administers the New Jersey Supplemental  
16 Nutrition Assistance Program; the Department of Health  
17 administers the New Jersey Supplemental Nutrition Program for  
18 Women Infants and Children; and the Department of Agriculture  
19 and Education administer the United States Department of  
20 Agriculture's school nutrition program in New Jersey;

21 (d) The State's food insecurity programs are currently operating  
22 in silos and, in some cases, they may all cover the same families,  
23 yet not all eligible families are enrolled into each program; and

24 (e) Establishing an Office of the Food Insecurity Advocate by  
25 statute will help coordinate the administration of the State's food  
26 insecurity programs, advocate for the food insecure, and develop  
27 new policy initiatives to combat hunger and facilitate greater access  
28 to food relief programs.

29

30 2. As used in this act:

31 "Food insecurity program" means a nutrition program in this  
32 State that provides nutrition assistance to individuals without  
33 reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food  
34 and includes, but is not limited to, the New Jersey Supplemental  
35 Nutrition Assistance Program, the New Jersey Supplemental  
36 Nutrition Program for Women Infants and Children, and the United  
37 States Department of Agriculture's school nutrition program.

38

39 3. There is created in the Executive Branch of the State  
40 Government the Office of the Food Insecurity Advocate. For the  
41 purpose of complying with the provisions of Article V, Section IV,  
42 paragraph 1 of the New Jersey Constitution, the Office of Food  
43 Insecurity Advocate is allocated to the Department of Treasury, but  
44 notwithstanding this allocation, the office shall be independent of  
45 any supervision or control by the department or any board or officer  
46 thereof, in the performance of its duties. The office shall have the  
47 duty to:

- 1 (a) coordinate outreach for food insecurity programs, including
- 2 developing new initiatives and outreach campaigns and identifying
- 3 best practices to increase enrollment in the State's food insecurity
- 4 programs;
- 5 (b) establish a 24-hour toll-free hunger hotline to assist in
- 6 making information about the State's food insecurity programs as
- 7 widely available as possible;
- 8 (c) support grant application processes related to food insecurity
- 9 for in-state providers and State departments by monitoring available
- 10 grants, recommending grant applications, and assisting with the
- 11 grant application process;
- 12 (d) coordinate communication with and between food banks;
- 13 (e) establish best practices for food banks to reduce food waste
- 14 and to distribute more fresh produce and proteins to food insecurity
- 15 programs and food banks;
- 16 (f) collaborate with research organizations and universities to
- 17 monitor ongoing gap analysis that identifies areas that are
- 18 undeserved by current food insecurity programs;
- 19 (g) collaborate with State and community partners to develop a
- 20 strategic plan to address identified gaps in areas that are undeserved
- 21 by current food insecurity programs;
- 22 (h) oversee the development and implementation of public-
- 23 private partnerships to address food insecurity;
- 24 (i) provide support in coordinating assistance to address food
- 25 insecurity during federal or State declared states of emergency; and
- 26 (j) coordinate food insecurity programming and initiatives for
- 27 institutions of higher education with the Office of the Secretary of
- 28 Higher Education.
- 29
- 30 4. The administrator and chief executive officer of the office is
- 31 the food insecurity advocate, who shall be a person qualified by
- 32 training and experience to perform the duties of the office. The
- 33 food insecurity advocate shall be appointed by the Governor and
- 34 shall serve at the pleasure of the Governor during the Governor's
- 35 term of office and until the appointment and qualification of the
- 36 food insecurity advocate's successor. The food insecurity advocate
- 37 shall devote time entirely to the duties of the position and shall
- 38 receive a salary as determined by law. Any vacancy occurring in
- 39 the position of the food insecurity advocate shall be filled in the
- 40 same manner as the original appointment; except that if the food
- 41 insecurity advocate dies, resigns, becomes ineligible to serve for
- 42 any reason, or is removed from office, the Governor shall appoint
- 43 an acting food insecurity advocate, who shall serve until the
- 44 appointment and qualification of the food insecurity advocate's
- 45 successor, but in no event longer than six months from the
- 46 occurrence of the vacancy, and who shall exercise during this

1 period all the powers and duties of the food insecurity advocate  
2 pursuant to the provisions of this act.

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4 5. The food insecurity advocate, as administrator and chief  
5 executive officer of the office, shall:

6 a. administer and organize the work of the office and establish  
7 therein such administrative subdivisions as the food insecurity  
8 advocate may deem necessary, proper and expedient. The food  
9 insecurity advocate may formulate and adopt rules and regulations  
10 and prescribe duties for the efficient conduct of the business, work  
11 and general administration of the office. The food insecurity  
12 advocate may delegate to subordinate officers or employees in the  
13 office such power as the food insecurity advocate may deem  
14 desirable to be exercised under the food insecurity advocate's  
15 supervision and control;

16 b. appoint and remove stenographic, clerical, and other  
17 secretarial assistants as may be required for the proper conduct of  
18 the office, subject to the provisions of Title 11A of the New Jersey  
19 Statutes, and other applicable statutes, and within the limits of  
20 funds appropriated or otherwise made available therefor. In  
21 addition, and within funding limits, the food insecurity advocate  
22 may appoint, retain, or employ, without regard to the provisions of  
23 Title 11A of the New Jersey Statutes or any other statutes, any  
24 officers, financial managers, social workers, or other professionally  
25 qualified personnel on a contract basis or otherwise as the food  
26 insecurity advocate deems necessary;

27 c. maintain suitable headquarters for the office and such other  
28 quarters as the food insecurity advocate shall deem necessary to the  
29 proper functioning of the office;

30 d. solicit and accept grants of funds from the federal  
31 government and from other public and any private sources for any  
32 of the purposes of this act; provided, however, that any such funds  
33 shall be expended only pursuant to an appropriation made by law;

34 e. serve as the liaison between the Office of the Food  
35 Insecurity Advocate and the Departments of Agriculture, Education,  
36 Health, and Human Services; and

37 f. perform such other functions as may be prescribed in this act  
38 or by any other law.

39

40 6. Pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968,  
41 c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), the food insecurity advocate and the  
42 Commissioners of Agriculture, Education, Health, and Human  
43 Services may adopt any rules and regulations necessary to  
44 effectuate the purposes of this act.

45

46 7. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

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3       This bill establishes the Office of the Food Insecurity Advocate  
4 in, but not of, the Department of Treasury. The office will have the  
5 duty to: coordinate outreach for food insecurity programs, including  
6 developing new initiatives and outreach campaigns and identifying  
7 best practices to increase enrollment in the State's food insecurity  
8 programs; establish a 24-hour toll-free hunger hotline to assist in  
9 making information about the State's food insecurity programs as  
10 widely available as possible; support grant application processes  
11 related to food insecurity for in-state providers and State  
12 departments by monitoring available grants, recommending grant  
13 applications, and assisting with the grant application process;  
14 coordinate communication to and between food banks; establish  
15 best practices for food banks to reduce food waste and to distribute  
16 more fresh produce and proteins to food insecurity programs and  
17 food banks; collaborate with research organizations and universities  
18 to monitor ongoing gap analysis that identifies areas that are  
19 undeserved by current food insecurity programs; collaborate with  
20 State and community partners to develop a strategic plan to address  
21 identified gaps in areas that are undeserved by current food  
22 insecurity programs; oversee the development and implementation  
23 of public-private partnerships to address food insecurity; provide  
24 support in coordinating assistance to address food insecurity during  
25 federal or State-declared states of emergency; and coordinate food  
26 insecurity programming and initiatives for institutions of higher  
27 education with the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education.

28       The bill provides that the administrator and chief executive  
29 officer of the office will be the food insecurity advocate, who will  
30 be a person qualified by training and experience to perform the  
31 duties of the office. The food insecurity advocate will be appointed  
32 by the Governor and will serve at the pleasure of the Governor  
33 during the Governor's term of office and until the appointment and  
34 qualification of the food insecurity advocate's successor. The food  
35 insecurity advocate will administer and organize the work of the  
36 office and serve as the liaison between the Office of the Food  
37 Insecurity Advocate and the Departments of Agriculture, Education,  
38 Health, and Human Services.

39       Over one million people are estimated to be food insecure in  
40 New Jersey and more than one-third of them are children. The  
41 coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic is projected to cause a  
42 disproportionate increase in the rate of food insecurity in this State  
43 compared to the national rate and neighboring states. Several  
44 departments are responsible for administering different food  
45 insecurity programs in the State: the Department of Human  
46 Services administers the New Jersey Supplemental Nutrition  
47 Assistance Program; the Department of Health administers the New

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1 Jersey Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women Infants and  
2 Children; and the Department of Agriculture and Education  
3 administer the United States Department of Agriculture's school  
4 nutrition program in New Jersey. The State's food insecurity  
5 programs are currently operating in silos and, in some cases, they  
6 may all cover the same families, yet not all eligible families are  
7 enrolled into each program. It is the sponsor's intent that  
8 establishing an Office of the Food Insecurity Advocate by statute  
9 will help coordinate the administration of the State's food insecurity  
10 programs, advocate for the food insecure, and develop new policy  
11 initiatives to combat hunger and facilitate greater access to food  
12 relief programs.