

[Second Reprint]

SENATE, No. 3945

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JUNE 10, 2021

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**Senators Ruiz, Turner, Assemblywomen Reynolds-Jackson, Quijano,
Murphy, Lampitt and Speight**

SYNOPSIS

Establishes Office of Food Insecurity Advocate.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As amended by the General Assembly on June 24, 2021.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 6/24/2021)

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 ²~~and Education administer~~ administers² the United States
20 Department of Agriculture's school nutrition program in New
21 Jersey;

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

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

30

31 2. As used in this act:

32 "Food insecurity program" means a nutrition program in this
33 State that provides nutrition assistance to individuals without
34 reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food
35 and includes, but is not limited to, the New Jersey Supplemental
36 Nutrition Assistance Program, the New Jersey Supplemental
37 Nutrition Program for Women Infants and Children, ¹the
38 Commodity Supplemental Food program, the Senior Farmers
39 Market Nutrition Program, the Child and Adult Care Program,¹ and
40 the United States Department of Agriculture's school nutrition
41 program.

42

43 3. There is created in the Executive Branch of the State
44 Government the Office of the Food Insecurity Advocate. For the

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets **[thus]** in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

Matter enclosed in superscript numerals has been adopted as follows:

¹Senate SBA committee amendments adopted June 17, 2021.

²Assembly floor amendments adopted June 24, 2021.

1 purpose of complying with the provisions of Article V, Section IV,
2 paragraph 1 of the New Jersey Constitution, the Office of Food
3 Insecurity Advocate is allocated to the ¹Economic Development
4 Authority in the¹ Department of ¹the¹ Treasury, but notwithstanding
5 this allocation, the office shall be independent of any supervision or
6 control by the ¹Economic Development Authority or by the¹
7 department ¹ or ¹by¹ any board or officer thereof, in the
8 performance of its duties. The office shall have the duty to
9 ²colaborate with the appropriate State agency to²:

10 (a) coordinate outreach for food insecurity programs, including
11 developing new initiatives and outreach campaigns and identifying
12 best practices to increase enrollment in the State's food insecurity
13 programs;

14 (b) establish a 24-hour toll-free hunger hotline to assist in
15 making information about the State's food insecurity programs as
16 widely available as possible;

17 (c) support grant application processes related to food insecurity
18 for in-state providers and State departments by monitoring available
19 grants, recommending grant applications, and assisting with the
20 grant application process;

21 (d) coordinate communication with and between food banks;

22 (e) establish best practices for food banks to reduce food waste
23 and to distribute more fresh produce and proteins to food insecurity
24 programs and food banks;

25 (f) ²**[collaborate]** cooperate² with research organizations and
26 universities to monitor ongoing gap analysis that identifies areas
27 that are undeserved by current food insecurity programs;

28 (g) ²**[collaborate]** work² with State and community partners to
29 develop a strategic plan to address identified gaps in areas that are
30 undeserved by current food insecurity programs;

31 (h) oversee the development and implementation of public-
32 private partnerships to address food insecurity;

33 (i) provide support in coordinating assistance to address food
34 insecurity during federal or State declared states of emergency;
35 ¹**[and]**¹

36 (j) coordinate food insecurity programming and initiatives for
37 institutions of higher education with the Office of the Secretary of
38 Higher Education¹;

39 (k) develop new initiatives, establish an outreach campaign, and
40 identify best practices to reach senior citizens, persons with
41 disabilities, and other vulnerable population; and

42 (l) coordinate outreach efforts for the newly unemployed who
43 might be eligible for food insecurity programs¹.

44

45 4. The administrator and chief executive officer of the office is
46 the food insecurity advocate, who shall be a person qualified by

1 training and experience to perform the duties of the office. The
2 food insecurity advocate shall be appointed by the Governor and
3 shall serve at the pleasure of the Governor during the Governor's
4 term of office and until the appointment and qualification of the
5 food insecurity advocate's successor. The food insecurity advocate
6 shall devote time entirely to the duties of the position and shall
7 receive a salary as determined by law. Any vacancy occurring in
8 the position of the food insecurity advocate shall be filled in the
9 same manner as the original appointment; except that if the food
10 insecurity advocate dies, resigns, becomes ineligible to serve for
11 any reason, or is removed from office, the Governor shall appoint
12 an acting food insecurity advocate, who shall serve until the
13 appointment and qualification of the food insecurity advocate's
14 successor, but in no event longer than six months from the
15 occurrence of the vacancy, and who shall exercise during this
16 period all the powers and duties of the food insecurity advocate
17 pursuant to the provisions of this act.

18

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

21 a. administer and organize the work of the office and establish
22 therein such administrative subdivisions as the food insecurity
23 advocate may deem necessary, proper and expedient. The food
24 insecurity advocate may formulate and adopt rules and regulations
25 and prescribe duties for the efficient conduct of the business, work
26 and general administration of the office. The food insecurity
27 advocate may delegate to subordinate officers or employees in the
28 office such power as the food insecurity advocate may deem
29 desirable to be exercised under the food insecurity advocate's
30 supervision and control;

31 b. appoint and remove stenographic, clerical, and other
32 secretarial assistants as may be required for the proper conduct of
33 the office, subject to the provisions of Title 11A of the New Jersey
34 Statutes, and other applicable statutes, and within the limits of
35 funds appropriated or otherwise made available therefor. In
36 addition, and within funding limits, the food insecurity advocate
37 may appoint, retain, or employ, without regard to the provisions of
38 Title 11A of the New Jersey Statutes or any other statutes, any
39 officers, financial managers, social workers, or other professionally
40 qualified personnel on a contract basis or otherwise as the food
41 insecurity advocate deems necessary;

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

45 d. solicit and accept grants of funds from the federal
46 government and from other public and any private sources for any

- 1 of the purposes of this act; provided, however, that any such funds
2 shall be expended only pursuant to an appropriation made by law;
- 3 e. serve as the liaison between the Office of the Food
4 Insecurity Advocate and the Departments of Agriculture, Education,
5 Health, and Human Services; and
- 6 f. perform such other functions as may be prescribed in this act
7 or by any other law.
- 8
- 9 6. Pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968,
10 c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), the food insecurity advocate and the
11 Commissioners of Agriculture, Education, Health, and Human
12 Services may adopt any rules and regulations necessary to
13 effectuate the purposes of this act.
- 14
- 15 7. This act shall take effect immediately.