

[First Reprint]

**ASSEMBLY, No. 5884**

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

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INTRODUCED JUNE 9, 2021

**Sponsored by:**

**Assemblyman CRAIG J. COUGHLIN**

**District 19 (Middlesex)**

**Assemblyman VINCENT MAZZEO**

**District 2 (Atlantic)**

**SYNOPSIS**

Establishes Office of Food Insecurity Advocate.

**CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT**

As reported by the Assembly Women and Children Committee on June 16, 2021, with amendments.



**(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 6/14/2021)**

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 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, <sup>1</sup>the  
37 Commodity Supplemental Food program, the Senior Farmers  
38 Market Nutrition Program, the Child and Adult Care Program,<sup>1</sup> and  
39 the United States Department of Agriculture's school nutrition  
40 program.

41  
42 3. There is created in the Executive Branch of the State  
43 Government the Office of the Food Insecurity Advocate. For the  
44 purpose of complying with the provisions of Article V, Section IV,  
45 paragraph 1 of the New Jersey Constitution, the Office of Food

**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:

<sup>1</sup>Assembly AWC committee amendments adopted June 16, 2021.

1 Insecurity Advocate is allocated to the Department of Treasury, but  
2 notwithstanding this allocation, the office shall be independent of any  
3 supervision or control by the department or any board or officer  
4 thereof, in the performance of its duties. The office shall have the duty  
5 to:

6 (a) coordinate outreach for food insecurity programs, including  
7 developing new initiatives and outreach campaigns and identifying  
8 best practices to increase enrollment in the State's food insecurity  
9 programs;

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

13 (c) support grant application processes related to food insecurity  
14 for in-state providers and State departments by monitoring available  
15 grants, recommending grant applications, and assisting with the grant  
16 application process;

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

18 (e) establish best practices for food banks to reduce food waste  
19 and to distribute more fresh produce and proteins to food insecurity  
20 programs and food banks;

21 (f) collaborate with research organizations and universities to  
22 monitor ongoing gap analysis that identifies areas that are undeserved  
23 by current food insecurity programs;

24 (g) collaborate with State and community partners to develop a  
25 strategic plan to address identified gaps in areas that are undeserved by  
26 current food insecurity programs;

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

29 (i) provide support in coordinating assistance to address food  
30 insecurity during federal or State declared states of emergency;

31 **'[and]'**

32 (j) coordinate food insecurity programming and initiatives for  
33 institutions of higher education with the Office of the Secretary of  
34 Higher Education<sup>1</sup>;

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

38 (l) coordinate outreach efforts for the newly unemployed who  
39 might be eligible for food insecurity programs<sup>1</sup>.

40  
41 4. The administrator and chief executive officer of the office is  
42 the food insecurity advocate, who shall be a person qualified by  
43 training and experience to perform the duties of the office. The  
44 food insecurity advocate shall be appointed by the Governor and  
45 shall serve at the pleasure of the Governor during the Governor's  
46 term of office and until the appointment and qualification of the

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

14

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

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

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

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

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

45 e. serve as the liaison between the Office of the Food  
46 Insecurity Advocate and the Departments of Agriculture, Education,  
47 Health, and Human Services; and

- 1       f.   perform such other functions as may be prescribed in this act  
2   or by any other law.  
3
- 4       6.   Pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968,  
5   c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), the food insecurity advocate and the  
6   Commissioners of Agriculture, Education, Health, and Human  
7   Services may adopt any rules and regulations necessary to  
8   effectuate the purposes of this act.  
9
- 10      7.   This act shall take effect immediately.