**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, BY ADDING SECTION 43‑5‑250 SO AS TO ESTABLISH THE “FRUIT AND VEGETABLE SNAP GRANT PROGRAM” TO ENCOURAGE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP) RECIPIENTS TO PURCHASE MORE FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES BY PROVIDING THEM WITH A CERTAIN ADDITIONAL ALLOTMENT, TO ESTABLISH THE FRUIT AND VEGETABLE SNAP GRANT FUND, AND TO PROVIDE THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES SHALL COORDINATE WITH LOCAL GROCERY STORES AND FARMERS’ MARKETS TO DEVELOP CERTAIN PLANS.

Whereas, despite South Carolina’s agricultural abundance, thousands of South Carolinians struggle daily to make ends meet and provide their families with enough food. This inequity has deep, negative impacts on the health of South Carolina families, contributing to high levels of food insecurity and diet‑related diseases; and

Whereas, clear evidence indicates that increasing consumption of fruits and vegetables can help improve health outcomes, yet thousands of low‑income South Carolinians report that they cannot consistently afford to purchase fruits and vegetables; and

Whereas, numerous studies and evaluations have found that the SNAP benefit amount, which is set by the federal government, is inadequate to support the purchase of nutritious foods that support a healthy diet, particularly fruits and vegetables; and

Whereas, in other states, programs providing supplemental benefits have demonstrated that when low‑income families have additional money for fruits and vegetables, they buy and consume more fruits and vegetables; and

Whereas, these supplemental benefit programs support farmers and the agricultural sector by increasing sales of fruits and vegetables; and

Whereas, for supplemental benefit programs to be widely available at grocery stores and farmers’ markets statewide, customers and retailers need a system that is simple to use, is efficient to administer, and can be incorporated into existing retail business operations; and

Whereas, it is the intent of the General Assembly to build upon the success of existing nutrition incentive programs at various retail outlets including, but not limited to, farmers’ markets, farm stands, mobile markets, corner stores, and grocery stores in order to support and enhance those programs and increase access to healthy food for low‑income South Carolinians. Now, therefore,

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. Article 1, Chapter 5, Title 43 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Section 43‑5‑250. (A) There is created the ‘Fruit and Vegetable SNAP Grant Program’ to be administered by the Department of Social Services to encourage Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients to purchase more fresh fruits and vegetables. Each time a SNAP recipient purchases fresh fruits or vegetables using his SNAP benefits, he receives an additional SNAP allotment. The additional allotment of SNAP benefits must be used to purchase fresh fruits or vegetables.

(B) There is created the Fruit and Vegetable SNAP Grant Fund. This fund is separate and distinct from the general fund of the State and all other funds. Earnings on this fund must be credited to it and any balance in this fund at the end of a fiscal year carries forward in the fund in the succeeding fiscal year. The fund also may receive donations and grants from public and private sources. Revenues credited to this fund must be used only by the department to operate the Fruit and Vegetable SNAP Grant Program.

(C) The department shall coordinate with local grocery stores and farmers’ markets to develop a plan to implement the provisions of this section.

(D) The department shall promulgate regulations specifying the manner in which an individual becomes eligible for a grant and shall determine the manner in which money from the fund is distributed.

(E) The provisions of this section are contingent upon the appropriation of necessary funding by the General Assembly for the Fruit and Vegetable SNAP Grant Program.”

SECTION 2. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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