

ASSEMBLY AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY
COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO
ASSEMBLY, No. 5462

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 15, 2023

The Assembly Agriculture and Food Security Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Assembly Bill No. 5462.

This bill, as amended, would amend and supplement P.L.2021, c.483 (C.52:27J-1 et seq.), which established the Office of the Food Security Advocate. The bill would establish, in statute, certain conditions concerning the use of monies appropriated to emergency food organizations pursuant to an annual appropriations act.

The bill defines “emergency food organization” as a food bank which receives funding for Food and Hunger Programs pursuant to an annual State appropriations act. P.L.2022, c.49, i.e., the annual appropriations act for the fiscal year ending on June 30, 2023, provided that the amount appropriated for Food and Hunger Programs would be directly distributed as follows: 53 percent to the Community Food Bank of New Jersey; 15 percent to the Food Bank of South Jersey; 15 percent to Fulfill Monmouth & Ocean; 11 percent to the Mercer Street Friends Food Bank; three percent to Norwescap; and three percent to the Southern Regional Food Distribution Center.

The bill would require 10 percent of each emergency food organization’s funding allocation to be expended on New Jersey agricultural products, including expenditures related to agricultural capital investment and innovation, up to 30 percent to be expended for the administrative and staffing costs and the purchase of capital investments or infrastructure, including the purchase of necessary technology, vehicles, and storage, and no less than 60 percent to be expended in order to support local distribution agencies. Support for local distribution agencies would include the purchasing of food that fulfills local distribution agencies’ stated needs, the awarding of cash funds to local distribution agencies, or the reimbursement of local distribution agencies based on costs incurred by each agency. Emergency food organizations will be permitted to apply to the Office of the Food Security Advocate for a waiver to utilize these funds to fill a demonstrated need for a program that supports local distribution agencies.

The bill would require the Office of the Food Security Advocate, in consultation with emergency food organizations, to develop a process for eliciting and gathering data about local distribution agencies' food and capacity needs, and would require each emergency food organization to use that process and data to develop a data-informed plan for the equitable support of local food distribution agencies (i.e., food pantries, soup kitchens, and religious organizations that provide free food), which would be tailored to the service area and needs of the specific emergency food organization. In addition, the bill would require each emergency food organization, on a monthly basis, to prepare and submit a State funding expenditures report to the Office of the Food Security Advocate. Funding for emergency food organizations would be contingent, under the bill, on their successful implementation of a data-informed plan, as required by the bill, and their satisfaction of the fiscal and programmatic requirements and other contractual obligations detailed in their contracts.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The amendments to this bill:

(1) increase the maximum amount that each emergency food organization's funding allocation may be used for administrative, staffing, and infrastructure costs from 20 percent to 30 percent;

(2) require that no less than 60 percent of each emergency food organization's State funding allocation shall be used to support local distribution agencies;

(3) require the Office of the Food Security Advocate, in consultation with the emergency food organizations, to develop a process for eliciting and gathering data about local distribution agencies' food and capacity needs;

(4) require each emergency food organization to use the office's process and data to develop a data-informed plan for the equitable support of local food distribution agencies, which would be tailored to the service area and needs of the specific emergency food organization;

(5) require emergency food organizations to provide a written report to the Office of the Food Security Advocate on a monthly (rather than quarterly) basis; and

(6) make emergency food organizations' funding contingent upon their successful implementation of the data-informed plan required by the bill, and their satisfaction of the fiscal and programmatic requirements and other contractual obligations detailed in their contracts.