

Senate Bill 177

By: Senators Jones II of the 22nd, Goodman of the 8th, Butler of the 55th, Hickman of the 4th and Sims of the 12th

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Title 2 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to agriculture, so as to
2 enact the "Food Insecurity Eradication Act"; to provide for definitions; to create the Georgia
3 Food Security Advisory Council; to provide for duties; to provide for appointments and
4 reimbursements; to provide for reporting requirements; to provide for related matters; to
5 provide for an effective date and automatic repeal; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other
6 purposes.

7 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

8 **SECTION 1.**

9 Title 2 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to agriculture, is amended by
10 adding a new chapter to read as follows:

11 "CHAPTER 24

12 2-24-1.

13 This chapter shall be known and may be cited as the 'Georgia Food Insecurity Eradication
14 Act.'

15 2-24-2.

16 As used in this chapter, the term:

17 (1) 'Council' means the Georgia Food Security Advisory Council.

18 (2) 'Food bank' means an established nonprofit charitable organization which is qualified
19 as exempt from taxation under the provisions of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal
20 Revenue Code of 1986 and which, as part of an existing food bank network, maintains
21 a food distribution operation providing food to nonprofit food pantries and feeding
22 centers that offer groceries or meals to persons in need of food assistance.

23 (3) 'Food insecurity' means a household-level economic and social condition of limited
24 or uncertain access to adequate food.

25 (4) 'SNAP' means the federally and state funded Georgia State Nutrition Assistance
26 Program and the Georgia Grown Farm to Food Bank Program.

27 (5) 'WIC program' means the federally funded health and nutrition program for infants
28 and children aged one to five years (including foster children), pregnant women,
29 breastfeeding mothers (up to one year), postpartum women (up to six months), and a
30 low-income parent or guardian who is the sole provider of children under age five who
31 are at risk of food insecurity and who are at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty
32 level.

33 2-24-3.

34 (a) There is established the Georgia Food Security Advisory Council created within the
35 Department of Agriculture, and the council shall:

36 (1) Advise the General Assembly and all state agencies as appropriate on best practices
37 to alleviate food insecurity;

38 (2) Recommend regulatory solutions to the WIC program. The solutions should include
39 but are not necessarily limited to changes that support an easier process for grocery store
40 owners and other food providers who obtain and maintain their WIC license;

- 41 (3) Recommend ways the State of Georgia can use tax credits, including the New Market
42 Tax Credit, as an economic incentive to create and maintain grocery stores in
43 food-insecure areas;
- 44 (4) Recommend ways to maximize current educational programs that educate the public
45 on purchasing and consuming healthy foods;
- 46 (5) Recommend ways to maximize current funding efforts to assist food banks and food
47 pantries;
- 48 (6) Recommend policies which expand the number of farmers' markets which may
49 accept SNAP benefits;
- 50 (7) Recommend policies that encourage the use of food co-ops and community gardens
51 located in Georgia;
- 52 (8) Recommend policies that increase collaboration between the State of Georgia and
53 nonprofits which seek to eradicate food insecurity;
- 54 (9) Recommend policies that increase collaboration between the State of Georgia and
55 private entities which seek to end food insecurity;
- 56 (10) Create bylaws not in conflict with this Code section;
- 57 (11) Research and identify best practices to reduce food insecurity;
- 58 (12) Publish on the council's website a list of existing publicly accessible resources on
59 research and best practices for agencies, departments, and organizations to use in
60 alleviating food insecurity; and
- 61 (13) Solicit and accept donations, gifts, grants, property, or matching funds from any
62 public or private source for use by the council in conducting the activities required
63 pursuant to this Code section.

64 2-24-4.

- 65 (a) The Georgia Food Security Advisory Council shall consist of at least 16 members as
66 follows:

- 67 (1) Three ex officio members as follows:
- 68 (A) The Commissioner of Agriculture or his or her designee;
- 69 (B) The Commissioner of Labor or his or her designee;
- 70 (C) The State School Superintendent or his or her designee;
- 71 (2) Four members appointed by the Governor as follows:
- 72 (A) One citizen who shall serve as chairperson of the council and who shall not be a
- 73 state employee;
- 74 (B) One representative from the Department of Health;
- 75 (C) One representative from the Division of Family and Children Services in the
- 76 Department of Human Services; and
- 77 (D) One representative from an institution of higher learning dedicated to alleviating
- 78 food insecurity;
- 79 (3) Five members appointed by the Lieutenant Governor as follows:
- 80 (A) One representative from a hospital or health system with programming seeking to
- 81 end food insecurity;
- 82 (B) One representative from an organization dedicated to solving food insecurity by
- 83 using scientific methods and research based principles;
- 84 (C) One representative from a food policy council;
- 85 (D) One grocery or retail store owner or operator; and
- 86 (E) One representative from a municipal chamber of commerce located in an urban
- 87 area;
- 88 (4) Four members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives as follows:
- 89 (A) One Georgia farmer;
- 90 (B) One owner or operator of a food pantry or food bank;
- 91 (C) One representative from a municipal chamber of commerce located in an urban
- 92 area; and

93 (D) One representative who is or is an agent of an owner or operator of a Georgia
94 farmers' market.

95 (b) Any vacancy on the council resulting from the resignation of a member or otherwise
96 shall be filled in the same manner in which the original appointment was made.

97 (c) The council members shall receive no salary, but may be allowed a per diem and travel
98 expenses as allowed by law and available appropriations. Non-ex officio members of the
99 council shall be reimbursed by the Department of Agriculture. Ex officio members shall
100 be reimbursed by their respective agencies.

101 2-24-5.

102 (a) Meetings shall be at the call of the chairperson. Meetings may be held in person or
103 virtually as often as the chairperson deems necessary, but shall not be held fewer than four
104 times each calendar year. The council shall provide meaningful opportunities for public
105 input at meetings.

106 (b) The Department of Agriculture shall provide a space in either Atlanta, Georgia, or
107 another designated space as agreed upon by the majority of the council for the purposes of
108 council meetings.

109 2-24-6.

110 (a) Beginning July 1, 2024, and no later than July 1 of each year thereafter, the council
111 shall submit a report to the Governor and General Assembly reporting:

112 (1) Any and all activities undertaken by the council in the past year, and any progress
113 made toward the mission of the council;

114 (2) The status of funding of the council, including any grant funds solicited, accepted,
115 or used and any remaining balances; and

116 (3) Recommendations for actions or policies that may be undertaken by the Governor or
117 the General Assembly to alleviate food insecurity.

118 (b) Prior to submission, a draft of the annual report shall be made available for
119 dissemination and public comment at a public meeting.

120 2-24-7.

121 This chapter shall stand automatically repealed on June 30, 2026."

122 **SECTION 2.**

123 This Act shall become effective upon its approval by the Governor or upon its becoming law
124 without such approval.

125 **SECTION 3.**

126 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.