

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



REPRESENTATIVE ANDY JOSEPHSON

Sponsor Statement

House Bill 255: Related to a waiver of work requirements or time limits in the food stamp program

House Bill 255 relates to the administration of the federal food stamp program known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) by the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS). This bill requires DHSS to seek, accept and utilize federal work requirement waivers for Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) to the greatest extent possible under federal law. Alaska has historically been one of the states consistently granted a statewide waiver from ABAWD work requirement time limits due to high levels of unemployment (above 10%) statewide.

Work requirements for ABAWDs under SNAP stipulate that a person in this category loses benefits if they are unemployed for more than 3 months in a 36-month time span. Alaska's waiver has ensured flexibility in SNAP coverage for an estimated 6,917 vulnerable Alaskans. Workers in our state face a unique set of employment challenges including high cost of living, high seasonal employment numbers, limited work availability, lack of traditional employment opportunities in rural communities and food insecurity.

The U.S. Congress rejected proposed tightening of waiver requirements in the 2018 Farm Bill, but the Trump administration announced that they were moving forward with changes regardless. In Alaska, Governor Dunleavy announced that Alaska would be implementing even more stringent work requirements than federally mandated, and these requirements went into effect in October of 2019 well ahead of the federal deadline.

This legislation will enable Alaska's continued protection of vulnerable individuals who do not have the monetary resources to feed themselves and will ensure that the state is utilizing available federal funds to the greatest extent possible.

I encourage you to support this legislation and urge you to reach out to my office with any questions or concerns.