

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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#### HOUSE BILL 380

HB 380 compels the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services to seek permission from the United States Department of Agriculture to provide a hardship exemption to vendor selection and approval criteria in the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) supplemental food program.

Alaska is an increasingly diverse state with people of many different cultural, religious, and ethnic backgrounds sharing our local communities. These cultural enclaves are often populated by people of low-income status who need government assistance in making ends meet. Currently one of the only significant sources of food for the people on supplemental food programs are big-box stores which are either too far from the community or do not provide the items necessary for their unique cultural or religious needs.

Adding a hardship exemption to the WIC vendor program would allow those people with specific cultural or religious sustenance needs to have those needs met without undue expense or hardship.

HB 380 recognizes that Alaska is a diverse community and allows that diversity to be rewarded and to prosper.