

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

Senate Research Center  
81R9063 ALB-D

S.B. 1088  
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As Filed

### **AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT**

In November, 1995, Texas launched a statewide electronic benefit transfer (EBT) program that allows recipients to access food stamp and welfare benefits with the Lone Star Card, which is a debit card that can be used to make purchases at retail outlets. The program is currently administered by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC).

The EBT terminals used to administer the food stamp program do not accommodate farmers markets. Most market sites lack electricity and telephone services, and the expense of the wireless equipment is too high for most farmers market vendors.

Investing in using EBT terminals at farmers markets will increase access among lower-income consumers to fresh, healthy, locally grown fruits and vegetables. Further, it will increase access among family farmers to traditionally underserved market segments through state-administered, federally supported food assistance programs.

As proposed, S.B. 1088 requires HHSC, in conjunction with the Texas Department of Agriculture, to ensure that recipients of food stamp benefits are able to use the benefits to purchase food at farmers markets.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

### **SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS**

SECTION 1. Amends Chapter 33, Human Resources Code, by adding Section 33.0024, as follows:

Sec. 33.0024. USE OF FOOD STAMP BENEFITS AT FARMERS MARKETS. (a) Defines "farmers market" and "Lone Star Card."

(b) Requires the Health and Human Services Commission, in cooperation with the Department of Agriculture, to take all action necessary to ensure that recipients of food stamp benefits may use those benefits to purchase fresh fruits, vegetables, and other food at farmers markets.

(c) Provides that actions required under Subsection (b) include:

(1) ensuring the availability of Lone Star Card terminals at each farmers market so that food stamp recipients may use Lone Star Cards to make purchases at the market;

(2) providing training and technical assistance to managers and vendors at farmers markets regarding acceptance of the Lone Star Card; and

(3) conducting an outreach campaign to inform food stamp recipients of the ability to use Lone Star Cards at farmers markets.

SECTION 2. Requires a state agency, if necessary for implementation of a provision of this Act, to request a waiver or authorization from a federal agency, and authorizes delay of implementation until such waivers or authorizations are granted.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2009.