

SB 609 -1 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Human Services

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Meeting Dates: 2/27, 3/22, 3/27

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Requires the Department of Human Services to consider hours worked as a graduate assistant as hours worked in employment for the purpose of meeting work requirements in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Takes effect on 91st day following adjournment sine die.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Graduate students needs and eligibility for benefits
- Hours worked at a university and wages of graduate assistants
- Graduate employees as a work force
- Graduate employees pay rates

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

-1 Modifies definition of graduate assistant to include graduate fellowships and externships in addition to graduate students. Modifies implementation date to January 1, 2025.

BACKGROUND:

The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides food benefits and education on food preparation and nutrition to low-income households. Eligibility is based mostly on monthly income. That includes earned income from work, as well as unearned income such as social security, disability, child support and more. SNAP eligibility is also based on [work requirements](#). The general work requirements include registering for work, participating in SNAP Employment and Training or workfare if assigned by a state SNAP agency, taking a suitable job if offered, and not voluntarily quitting a job or reducing work hours below 30 a week without a good reason. Oregon residents may be able to get SNAP if they are working, receiving unemployment, or attending school. Individuals may have additional considerations when applying for SNAP as graduate students often do not qualify for SNAP benefits. According to USDA, students attending an institution of higher education more than half-time (i.e., college, university, trade/technical school) are not eligible for SNAP unless they meet a federal exemption. The institution of higher education determines what is considered 'half-time' enrollment. Students who meet an exemption must also meet all other [SNAP eligibility requirements](#).

Senate Bill 609 allows hours a graduate assistant works to be considered as hours worked in employment for the purpose of meeting eligibility requirements for SNAP.