

Senate Bill 537

By: Senators Jones II of the 22nd, Goodman of the 8th, Jackson of the 2nd, Sims of the 12th, Rhett of the 33rd and others

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
AN ACT

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

6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

7 **SECTION 1.**

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

10 "CHAPTER 24

11 2-24-1.

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

14 2-24-2.

15 As used in this chapter, the term:

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

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

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

24 (4) 'Food pantry' means a public or private nonprofit organization which distributes food  
25 directly to persons in need of services.

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

28 (6) 'WIC' means the federally funded health and nutrition program for Infants and  
29 Children age one to five years (including foster children), Pregnant Women,  
30 Breastfeeding Mothers (up to one year), Postpartum Women (up to six months), and a  
31 low-income parent or guardian who is the sole provider of children under age five who  
32 are at nutritional risk and who are at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty 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) Recommend regulatory solutions to the WIC Program. The solutions should include  
37 but are not necessarily limited to adding grocery store owners and other food providers  
38 who obtain and maintain their WIC license;

- 39 (2) Recommend ways the State of Georgia can use tax credits including the New Market  
40 Tax Credit as an economic incentive to create and maintain grocery stores in food  
41 insecure areas;
- 42 (3) Recommend ways to maximize current educational programs which educate the  
43 public on purchasing and consuming healthy foods;
- 44 (4) Recommend ways to maximize current funding efforts to assist food banks and food  
45 pantries;
- 46 (5) Recommend policies which expand the number of farmers markets which may accept  
47 SNAP benefits;
- 48 (6) Recommend policies that encourage the use of food co-ops and community gardens  
49 located in Georgia;
- 50 (7) Recommend policies that increase collaboration between the State of Georgia and  
51 nonprofits which seek to eradicate food insecurity;
- 52 (8) Recommend policies that increase collaboration between the State of Georgia and  
53 private entities which seek to end food insecurity; and
- 54 (9) Create bylaws, not in conflict with this Code section.
- 55 (b) The Georgia Food Security Advisory Council shall consist of at least 23 members  
56 appointed by the Governor who have training, experience, or special knowledge concerning  
57 agriculture and community food resources as follows:
- 58 (1) The Commissioner of Agriculture or his or her designee;
- 59 (2) The Commissioner of Labor or his or her designee;
- 60 (3) The commissioner of human services or his or her designee;
- 61 (4) The State School Superintendent or his or her designee;
- 62 (5) The director of the Division of Family and Children Services or his or her designee;
- 63 (6) The commissioner of public health or his or her designee;
- 64 (7) The commissioner of community affairs or his or her designee;

- 65 (8) A representative from the University of Georgia Extension appointed by the  
66 Governor;
- 67 (9) A representative from the University of Georgia Food Systems Initiative appointed  
68 by the Lieutenant Governor;
- 69 (10) A representative from Emory University or a similar institution of higher learning  
70 which is dedicated to ending food insecurity, appointed by the Speaker of the House of  
71 Representatives;
- 72 (11) A representative from Grady Health Systems or a comparable hospital dedicated to  
73 ending Food Insecurity appointed by the Speaker Pro Tempore of the House of  
74 Representatives;
- 75 (12) A representative from a certified community development entity that seeks to foster  
76 economic development in the State of Georgia with consultation by Atlanta emerging  
77 markets appointed by the Majority Leader of the Senate;
- 78 (13) A representative who is or is an agent of an owner or operator of a Georgia farmers  
79 market with consultation provided by the Georgia Farmers Market Association appointed  
80 by the Majority Leader of the House of Representatives;
- 81 (14) A representative from an organization dedicated to solving food insecurity by using  
82 scientific methods and research based principles with consultation from Science of  
83 Georgia appointed by the Minority Leader of the Senate;
- 84 (15) A representative from a food policy council with consultation from the Georgia  
85 Food Security Advisory Council appointed by the Minority Leader of the House of  
86 Representatives;
- 87 (16) A representative from a Georgia Chamber of Commerce with consultation by the  
88 Georgia Chamber of Commerce appointed by the Governor;
- 89 (17) A representative from Georgia State University appointed by the Lieutenant  
90 Governor;

- 91 (18) A grocery store owner or operator with consultation by the Georgia Food Industry  
92 Association appointed by the Senate President Pro Tempore;
- 93 (19) A county commissioner appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives  
94 with consultation with the Association County Commissioners of Georgia;
- 95 (20) A Georgia mayor appointed by the Speaker Pro Tempore of the House of  
96 Representatives with consultation with the Georgia Municipal Association;
- 97 (21) A Georgia farmer appointed by the Majority Leader of the Senate in consultation  
98 with the Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association;
- 99 (22) An owner or operator of a food bank with consultation from the Georgia Food Bank  
100 Association appointed by the Minority Leader of the Senate; and
- 101 (23) An owner or operator of a food pantry with consultation from the Georgia Food  
102 Bank Association appointed by the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives.
- 103 (c)(1) Except for the appointment terms of council members listed in paragraphs (1)  
104 through (7) of subsection (b) of this Code section, appointments to the council shall be  
105 for a term of three years. The initial terms shall commence no later than October 1, 2022,  
106 and shall expire on June 30 of the members' respective term limits. Except those  
107 members of the council whose terms will not expire, each member shall serve until their  
108 successors are appointed and duly qualified. Any appointed member shall be eligible for  
109 reappointment.
- 110 (2) The members appointed in paragraphs (1) through (7) of subsection (b) of this Code  
111 section do not have term limits and their terms are not staggered.
- 112 (3) The terms of members appointed in paragraphs (8) through (13) of subsection (b) of  
113 this Code section shall end on June 30, 2025.
- 114 (4) The terms of members appointed in paragraphs (14) through (19) of subsection (b)  
115 of this Code section shall end on June 30, 2026.
- 116 (5) The terms of members appointed in paragraphs (20) through (23) of subsection (b)  
117 of this Code section shall end on June 30, 2027.

118 (d)(1) The Food Security Advisory Council shall have one chairperson. The council  
119 shall, by a majority vote of the members, select the chairperson every other year from  
120 among current members of the council.

121 (2) The chairperson shall call the meetings and shall notify the members of each meeting  
122 being called at least seven days before the date on which the meeting is to occur.  
123 Meetings shall be held as often as the chairperson deems necessary but not less than four  
124 times each calendar year. The chairperson shall arrange for the location and staffing of  
125 the meetings, and the cost shall be borne by the council from funds duly appropriated by  
126 the General Assembly or other funding sources agreed upon by a majority vote of the  
127 council.

128 (e) Any vacancy on the Food Security Advisory Council resulting from the resignation of  
129 a member or otherwise shall be filled in the same manner in which the original appointment  
130 was made and the term shall be for the balance of the unexpired term of the member who  
131 created the vacancy.

132 (f) The council members shall receive no salary, but may be allowed a per diem and travel  
133 expenses as allowed by law and available appropriations.

134 (g) The Department of Agriculture shall provide a space in Atlanta, Georgia, or other  
135 designated space as agreed upon by the majority of the council.

136 (h) No later than October 1 of each year the council shall report its findings and  
137 recommendations, including any legislative proposals, (if applicable) to the Governor, the  
138 Lieutenant Governor, the Commissioner of Agriculture, the Senate President Pro Tempore,  
139 the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Majority and Minority Leaders of the  
140 Senate, and the Speaker Pro Tempore. The first report due under this subsection is due no  
141 later than December 1, 2022."

142

**SECTION 2.**

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

145

**SECTION 3.**

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