Bill Description: Updating restrictions on electronic benefit cards.

Bill Number: SB 6136

Bill Sponsor: Senator Joe Nguyen

Effective Date: June 11, 2020

Amends: RCW 74.08.580

Background

The Legislature passed a bill in 2011 to prevent public assistance recipients from using public funds to purchase a number of types of products, including tattoos or body piercings, lottery tickets or other gambling, cigarettes and alcohol, among other products. The policy in that legislation was to be enforced in part, by requiring certain retailers to disable any on-site Automated Teller Machines and point-of-sale devices from being able to accept an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card issued to public assistance recipients. Establishments required to prevent usage of EBTs included taverns, night clubs, beer and wine specialty stores, and a variety of other businesses from tattoo parlors and adult entertainment venues to any business barred to entry for persons under 18 years of age. The Washington Food Industry Association (WFIA) requested this bill after approaching both the LCB and the Department of Social and Health Services, which issues the EBTs and administers programs such as SNAP (commonly known as Food Stamps) about the issue. A significant proportion of the approximately 640 beer and wine specialty store licensees in Washington are also grocery stores. WFIA argued that the only access to groceries in some communities may be a store that sells beer and or wine. This bill also aligns the state law with federal law.

Bill Summary

- This bill authorizes beer and/or wine specialty stores that are authorized retailers under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) programs to accept the EBT card through their point-of-sale machines or ATMs.
- Taverns and night clubs must still have ATMs and point-of-sale devices disabled in relation to the use of EBTs.

Contact Information:
If you have questions, please contact Chris Thompson, Director of Legislative Relations.