

STATE SENATOR • MARTHA G. SCOTT • 2ND DISTRICT

Scott Press Release

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MICHIGAN FIRST IN NATION TO IMPLEMENT FOOD ASSISTANCE CHANGE

Legislation will spread payments; alleviate monthly demand

LANSING – Sen. Martha G. Scott (D-Highland Park) today praised members of the Michigan House of Representatives for voting on final passage of Senate Bill 120, a bill that will change the payment of food stamp assistance to twice monthly. Michigan would be the first state to distribute food stamps in a manner benefiting both recipients and the economy. The bill, sponsored by Sen. Scott, will head to Governor Granholm for her signature.

“Passage culminates a long and diligent process toward an important policy change,” said Sen. Scott. “The benefits to children and families, as well as store owners and employees, are immeasurable. I am proud of my colleagues for supporting me in this effort.”

Currently, food stamp benefits are distributed to eligible recipients in one lump sum payment over the first 10 days of the month, resulting in a high demand for groceries during the first 10 days of the month, then a dramatic slow down during the remainder of the month. SB 120, requiring split issuance, would make Michigan the first state in the nation to require two evenly divided payments made during the beginning and then middle of the month.

Some stores, particularly in our urban settings, are unable to keep fresh produce or meat during the remaining 20 days of the month, depriving customers of fresher and healthier choices. In addition, workers' hours are often scaled back to accommodate the slowdown in business. A more equal distribution of food stamps will simplify inventory management and allow consumers to take advantage of sales and special pricing throughout the month, benefiting retail food workers, grocers and consumers. The change benefits consumers by encouraging them to shop more than once a month, assuring them fresher products and greater selection. It also assists grocers and employees by spreading out demand and eliminating the shelve-clearing rush that often occurs at the beginning of the month.

Currently, in Michigan, there are approximately 570,000 food stamp cases with roughly 1.2 million recipients. The food stamp program is primarily federally funded, with the Department of Human Services contributing 50 percent of administration costs.

SB 120 has the support of several groups including the Associated Food & Petroleum Dealers, the United Food & Commercial Workers, the Michigan Grocers Association, Spartan Stores and Meijer.

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