
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Anthony Portantino, Chair
2023 - 2024 Regular Session

SB 476 (Limón) - Food safety: food handlers

Version: February 14, 2023

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: April 10, 2023

Policy Vote: HEALTH 9 - 2

Mandate: Yes

Consultant: Agnes Lee

Bill Summary: SB 476 would require food facility employers to pay an employee for any cost associated with the employee obtaining a food handler card, including the time it takes for the employee to complete the training and certification program, and the cost of the food handler certification program.

Fiscal Impact:

- The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) estimates ongoing General Fund costs of \$159,000 to publish and maintain the list of food handler training programs.
- Cost to counties for administration would be potentially reimbursable by the state, subject to a determination by the Commission on State Mandates.

Background: Current law requires all food handlers to obtain a “food handler card” within 30 days from the date of hire, and to maintain a valid food handler card for the duration of employment. The food handler course must provide basic, introductory instructions on specified elements of knowledge, including foodborne illness, the relationship between personal hygiene and food safety, methods of preventing food contamination, and procedures for cleaning and sanitizing equipment.

Existing law defines “food handler” as an individual who is involved in the preparation, storage, or service of food in a food facility, whereby a food facility is defined as an operation that stores, prepares, packages, serves, vends, or otherwise provides food for human consumption at the retail level. Various entities are excluded from the definition of a food facility, such as a cottage food operation, and a church, private club, or other nonprofit association that gives or sells food to its members and guests, and not to the general public, at an event that occurs no more than three days in any 90 day period.

Proposed Law: Specific provisions of the bill would:

- Require employers to pay an employee for any cost associated with the employee obtaining a food handler card, including, but not limited to, the time it takes for the employee to complete the training, the cost of the food handler certification program, and the time it takes to complete the certification program.
- Require CDPH to make a list of all certified food handler training programs, along with the cost of each program, available on its website by January 1, 2025. The bill would require local public health departments to provide a link of this page on their website or provide the same list on their website.

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