

SUBJECT: Reimbursing state employees for groceries while traveling on business

COMMITTEE: State Affairs — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 13 ayes — Paddie, Hernandez, Deshotel, Harless, Howard, Hunter, P. King, Lucio, Metcalf, Raymond, Shaheen, Slawson, Smithee

0 nays

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, May 10 — 30-0

WITNESSES: For — (*Registered, but did not testify:* James Parnell, Dallas Police Association; David Sinclair, Game Warden Peace Officers Association; Ray Hunt, HPOU; John Wilkerson, Texas Municipal Police Association)

Against — None

On — Craig Bonds, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

BACKGROUND: Interested parties note that the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the difficulties faced by state employees in purchasing groceries in advance of state-required travel. Some have called for allowing state agencies to reimburse state employees for groceries purchased both in advance of travel or while traveling on official state business. This ability could result in cost savings to agencies because staff could more easily purchase groceries for business travel rather than relying solely on spending funds at eating establishments.

DIGEST: SB 1020 would allow a state agency to reimburse a state employee for groceries purchased within the employee's designated headquarters if the purchase was made the day before or the day the employee traveled to conduct official state business and the groceries were consumed by the employee while away from the employee's designated headquarters traveling for official state business.

A state agency could only reimburse a state employee for the prorated

portion of groceries consumed each day while traveling for official state business.

A purchase made under the bill would be considered a meal expense for purposes of determining the limit established by the travel provisions of the general appropriations act for meal expenses.

A state agency would have to develop a policy for authorizing reimbursements before the agency could reimburse a state employee under the bill.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2021.