

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
85R20216 KKR-D

C.S.S.B. 2124
By: Perry
Finance
4/25/2017
Committee Report (Substituted)

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

The goal of the Benefits Waiver Pilot is to waive certain financial eligibility requirements for selected public assistance programs like Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and Child Care Management Services (CCMS) so that client benefits are tapered rather than abruptly cut off as client employment earnings increase.

The pilot program would have four stages for the participant.

1. A living wage.
2. Three months' savings.
3. No negative debt.
4. Freedom from government assistance.

Participants under the pilot program would be referred through social services providers and other community partners in a wrap-around case management to ensure the participant is achieving the plans goals. (Original Author's / Sponsor's Statement of Intent)

C.S.S.B. 2124 amends current law relating to a pilot program for assisting certain recipients of public benefits to permanent self-sufficiency.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission and the Texas Workforce Commission in SECTION 1 (Section 531.02241, Government Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter B, Chapter 531, Government Code, by adding Section 531.02241, as follows:

Sec. 531.02241. PILOT PROGRAM FOR SELF-SUFFICIENCY OF CERTAIN PERSONS RECEIVING TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES BENEFITS OR OTHER SERVICES. (a) Defines "financial assistance benefits," "living wage," and "self-sufficiency."

(b) Requires the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to develop and implement a pilot program (program) for assisting up to 100 eligible participants under this section to gain permanent self-sufficiency and no longer require financial assistance or other public benefits.

(c) Provides that the program will test waiving, for at least 24 months but no more than 60 months, income and asset limit eligibility requirements for financial assistance benefits. Requires the waiver of any income limit requirement to be in an amount that does not exceed the amount, based on a participant's family

makeup and the living wage in the participant's geographical area of residence, determined to be necessary for the purposes of the program. Requires the waiver of any asset limit requirement to be in an amount that is equal to or less than three months of the participant's income.

(d) Requires the program to be designed to allow social services providers, public benefit offices, and other community partners to refer potential participants to the program. Provides that a person is eligible to participate in the program established under this section if the person meets certain criteria.

(e) Requires that the program be designed to assist eligible participants in attaining self-sufficiency by:

(1) identifying eligibility requirements for the benefits described by Subsection (d)(1) (relating to an eligible person receiving financial assistance benefits) that may be waived for a limited period of time and that, if applied, would impede self-sufficiency;

(2) implementing strategies, including waiving the identified eligibility requirements, to remove barriers to self-sufficiency; and

(3) moving eligible participants through progressive stages toward self-sufficiency that include certain phases.

(f) Requires a person who wishes to participate in the program to attend an in-person intake meeting with a program case manager. Requires the case manager, during the intake meeting, to:

(1) determine whether:

(A) the person meets the eligibility requirements under Subsection (d); and

(B) the income or asset limit eligibility requirements may be waived under the program;

(2) review the person's demographic information and household financial budget;

(3) assess the person's current financial and career situations;

(4) collaborate with the person to develop and implement strategies for removing barriers to attaining self-sufficiency, including waiving income and asset limit eligibility requirements for financial assistance benefits; and

(5) if the person is determined to be eligible for and chooses to participate in the program, schedule a follow-up meeting to further assess the person's crisis, review available referral services, and create a service plan.

(g) Requires the pilot program to provide each participant with holistic, wraparound case management services to ensure that goals included in a participant's service plan are achieved. Requires a participant to be assigned a program case manager who is required to:

(1) if the participant is determined to be eligible, provide the participant with a waiver described by Subsection (c), allowing the participant to continue receiving financial assistance benefits;

(2) assess, at the follow-up meeting scheduled under Subsection (f)(5), the participant's crisis, review available referral services, and create a service plan; and

(3) during the initial phase of the program, create medium- and long-term goals consistent with the strategies developed under Subsection (f)(4).

(h) Requires the program established under this section to operate for at least 24 months. Requires the program to also include 16 additional months for planning and designing the program before the program begins operation and data collection and program evaluation after the program begins operation.

(i) Requires HHSC to develop and implement the program with the assistance of the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), local workforce development boards, faith-based and other relevant public or private organizations, and any other entity or person HHSC determines appropriate.

(j) Requires HHSC to monitor and evaluate the program in a manner that allows for promoting research-informed results of the program.

(k) Requires HHSC, on the conclusion of the program but not later than 24 months following the date on which the program begins operation, to report to the legislature on the results of the program. Requires that the report include certain information.

(l) Requires HHSC, during the operation of the program, to provide to the legislature additional reports concerning the program that HHSC determines to be appropriate.

(m) Authorizes the executive commissioner of HHSC and TWC to adopt rules to implement this section.

(n) Provides that this section expires September 1, 2022.

SECTION 2. Requires a state agency, if necessary for implementation of a provision of this Act, to request a waiver or authorization from a federal agency and authorizes delay of implementation until such a waiver or authorization is granted.

SECTION 3. Provides that this Act takes effect only if a specific appropriation for the implementation of the Act is provided in a general appropriations act of the 85th Legislature.

SECTION 4. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2017.