

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 1483
By: Frank
Human Services
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Concerns have been raised that a strict income threshold for determining eligibility for public benefits may create a barrier to certain benefit recipients obtaining a job that pays only a slightly better wage than those benefits provide. C.S.H.B. 1483 seeks to help certain benefit recipients gain self-sufficiency through the development of a pilot program that tests the waiving of the application of income or asset limit eligibility requirements for continuation of these benefits and certain related time requirements for a select number of families and instead allows for the continuation of benefits using a slow reduction scale.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission and to the Texas Workforce Commission in SECTION 1 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 1483 amends the Government Code to require the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to develop and implement a pilot program for assisting not more than 500 eligible families to gain permanent self-sufficiency and no longer require temporary assistance for needy families program (TANF) benefits, supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) benefits, or other means-tested public benefits. The bill authorizes the number of families that may be served under the program to be increased by 20 percent for the year following a year during which the number of families participating in the program reaches capacity as determined by HHSC. The bill defines, among other terms, "self-sufficiency" as being employed in a position that pays a living wage, having financial savings in an amount that is equal to at least \$1,000 per member of a family's household, and maintaining a debt-to-income ratio that does not exceed 43 percent.

C.S.H.B. 1483 makes eligible to participate in the pilot program a family that:

- includes one or more members who are recipients of TANF or SNAP benefits, at least one of whom is at least 18 but not more than 62 years of age and willing, and physically and legally able, to be employed; and
- has a total household income that is less than a living wage based on the family's makeup and geographical area of residence.

The bill requires a person from a family that wishes to participate in the program to attend an in-person intake meeting with a program case manager and sets out certain requirements for the case manager during the meeting.

C.S.H.B. 1483 establishes that the pilot program will test extending, for at least 24 months but not more than 60 months, TANF and SNAP benefits by waiving the application of income and asset limit eligibility requirements for those benefits and time limits for TANF benefits to allow for continuation of TANF and SNAP benefits and by reducing the benefits using a slow reduction scale for reducing TANF or SNAP benefits that correlates with a phase of the pilot program's progressive stages toward self-sufficiency. The bill requires HHSC to freeze a participating family's eligibility status for the benefits beginning on the date the family enters the program and ending on the date the family ceases participation. The waiver of the application of any asset limit requirement must allow the family to have assets in an amount that is at least \$1,000 per member of the family's household. The bill requires the program to be designed to allow social services providers, public benefit offices, and other community partners to refer potential participating families to the program and sets out the manner by which the program must be designed to assist families in attaining self-sufficiency.

C.S.H.B. 1483 requires a participating family to be assigned a program case manager and sets out required actions for the case manager. The bill requires the program to provide certain participating families with holistic, wraparound case management services that meet all applicable program requirements as provided by specified federal regulations. The bill requires those case management services to include the strategic use of TANF and SNAP benefits to ensure that goals included in the family's service plan are achieved and requires the services to be provided through a community-based provider.

C.S.H.B. 1483 requires the pilot program to operate for at least 24 months and to also include 16 additional months for specified activities related to the development, operation, and administration of the program. The bill 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. The bill requires HHSC to monitor and evaluate the program in a manner that allows for promoting research-informed program results. The bill requires HHSC, on the conclusion of the program but not later than 48 months following the date the last participating family is enrolled in the program, to report to the legislature on the program's results. The bill sets out the required contents of that report and requires HHSC, during the program's operation, to provide to the legislature additional reports concerning the program that HHSC determines to be appropriate.

C.S.H.B. 1483 authorizes the executive commissioner of HHSC and the TWC to adopt rules to implement the pilot program. The bill's provisions expire September 1, 2026.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2019.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.H.B. 1483 may differ from the original in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following summarizes the substantial differences between the introduced and committee substitute versions of the bill.

The substitute changes the definition of "self-sufficiency" for purposes of the pilot program.

The substitute includes provision for the waiving of the time limits for TANF benefits.

The substitute includes the requirement for HHSC to freeze a participating family's eligibility

status for TANF and SNAP benefits for the period during which the family participates in the pilot program. The bill does not include a provision relating to determining the amount of any income limit requirements of the program.

The substitute changes the amount of assets a participating family must be allowed to have from an amount equal to or less than \$1,000 per member of the family's household to at least \$1,000 per member.

The substitute includes the following provisions:

- a limitation on the applicability of the requirement for the pilot program to provide holistic, wraparound case management services;
- a provision subjecting those services to applicable federal requirements; and

a requirement for those services to be provided by a community-based provider.