

SUBJECT: Extending the enhanced eligibility system for health and human services

COMMITTEE: Public Health — favorable without amendment

VOTE: 10 ayes — Kolkhorst, Naishtat, Alvarado, Coleman, S. Davis,
V. Gonzales, S. King, Schwertner, Truitt, Zerwas

0 nays

1 absent — Laubenberg

WITNESSES: None

BACKGROUND: In 2007, the 80th Legislature enacted HB 3575 by Rose, which added subch. M to sec. 531 of the Government Code to establish specific performance targets and a transition plan for the enhanced eligibility system used by health and human services programs. The enhanced eligibility system refers to information technology and data processing systems used to delivery health and human services programs, including the Texas Integrated Eligibility Redesign System (TIERS) and the System of Application, Verification, Eligibility, Referral, and Reporting (SAVERR).

The legislation required the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to develop a transition plan for the enhanced system. It also established the HHSC eligibility system legislative oversight committee to monitor the system during the transition.

The goals established for the enhanced eligibility system with relation to health and human services programs include:

- increasing the quality of and client access to services provided through the programs;
- implementing more efficient business processes to reduce application processing times and staff workloads;
- implementing simplified application and enrollment processes;
- enhancing the integrity of and reducing fraud in benefit programs; and
- ensuring compliance with applicable federal law and rules.

A legislative oversight committee also was established to support HHSC with the implementation of the system. The committee's obligations include:

- conducting a public hearing at least once every four months;
- reviewing the progress made on the transition plan, including meeting the full functionality requirement and established goals;
- reviewing recommendations made by HHSC, the HHSC's Office of Inspector General, and the quality assurance team to take necessary action to achieve full functionality;
- making recommendations to the Legislature about any legislative action necessary to support the implementation of the enhanced eligibility system; and
- monitoring and regularly reporting to the Legislature on the effectiveness and efficiency of the implemented enhanced eligibility system.

The oversight committee consists of seven members, including the chairs of the House Human Services and Senate Health and Human Services committees, two House members appointed by the speaker, two senators appointed by the lieutenant governor, and one member appointed by the governor, with the HHSC commissioner serving as an ex officio member.

The legislation established numerous deadlines for the legislative oversight committee and HHSC as part of the enhancement and monitoring process. The agency continues to work in partnership with the legislative oversight committee to meet the full functionality goal. All provisions within subchap. M of chap. 531 of the Government Code will expire on September 1, 2011.

DIGEST: HB 1689 would extend the expiration date for provisions related to the monitoring and transition of the enhanced eligibility system to September 1, 2015.

The bill would take effect August 31, 2011.