

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

C.S.H.B. 3571  
By: Rose  
Human Services  
Committee Report (Substituted)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

The Food Stamp Program provides crucial support to those families making the transition from welfare to work. Currently in Texas, only 50% of those who are eligible are enrolled in the program. This equates to approximately 2 million Texans that are not receiving these fully federally-funded benefits. If we could increase that enrollment to 70%, not only would it drive hundreds of millions of new federal dollars into our economy, it would relieve some of the burden on our health care programs, such as Medicaid, which is partially state funded.

Studies show that food stamp recipients are more likely to buy healthy foods at the beginning of the month when they have food stamp dollars available to them. Given the high cost of obesity and diabetes in our state due in large part to poor eating habits based on the prevalence of cheap, unhealthy foods, it is important that we encourage the thousands of working poor that are eligible to receive food stamps but are not presently enrolled, to enroll and use these additional dollars to improve their nutrition and healthy eating habits.

As proposed, CSHB 3571 requires the Health and Human Services Commission to establish a pilot program under which a private retail business and the commission may enter into an agreement for the purpose of increasing outreach efforts and eligibility determinations for the food stamp program.

### **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 in SECTION 1 of this bill.

### **ANALYSIS**

C.S.H.B. 3571 requires the Health and Human Services Commission (commission) to develop and implement a pilot program in the South Texas region under which a private retail business that accepts food stamps enters into an agreement with the commission to support outreach efforts and eligibility determinations for that program.

The substitute authorizes an agreement entered into under this pilot program to require the private retail business to provide informational materials to its customers and other persons regarding the food stamp program, perform outreach services, provide space at retail locations at which commission staff and contractors may conduct outreach efforts and eligibility determinations for the program.

The substitute authorizes the executive commissioner to adopt rules regarding the requirements applicable to a private retail business that participates in the program.

The substitute requires the commission to submit a report to the legislature that includes an evaluation of the pilot program and recommendations regarding the continuation or expansion of the program by December 1, 2008.

The substitute provides that the pilot program expires on September 1, 2009.

The substitute requires a state agency to, if necessary, request a waiver or authorization from a federal agency before implementing any provision of the Act. The bill also authorizes the agency to delay implementing that provision until the waiver or authorization is granted.

## **EFFECTIVE DATE**

September 1, 2007.

## **COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL TO SUBSTITUTE**

The substitute requires the Health and Human Services Commission (commission) to enter into an agreement with a private retail business to support outreach efforts whereas the bill as filed requires the commission enter into partnerships with private entities, including retail and other businesses to conduct outreach efforts.

The substitute limits the pilot program to outreach efforts and eligibility determinations for the food stamp program in the south Texas region whereas the original bill required the commission to enter into partnerships with private entities in this state to conduct outreach efforts regarding the child health plan, the financial assistance program, the medical assistance program, nutritional assistance programs and any other health and human services program deemed appropriate. The substitute requires the commission to submit a report to the legislature that includes an evaluation of the pilot program and recommendations regarding the continuation or expansion of the program by December 1, 2008. The substitute provides that the pilot program expires on September 1, 2009. The substitute requires a state agency to, if necessary, request a waiver or authorization from a federal agency before implementing any provision of the Act and also authorizes the agency to delay implementing that provision until the waiver or authorization is granted.