

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

C.S.H.B. 886  
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Human Services  
Committee Report (Substituted)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

The goal of the food stamp program is to help individuals and families afford a nutritious diet. For working families, food stamps help families bridge the gap between their earnings and expenses during periods of unemployment or underemployment. Food stamp benefits play a particularly important role during an economic recession when many Texans find themselves temporarily out of work. Food stamp benefits are a 100 percent federally funded entitlement program. Federal law gives the option to operate a food stamp employment and training program and provides block grant funding for states that exercise this option. The goal of the program is to assist able-bodied food stamp recipients in obtaining employment. States have complete flexibility under federal law to decide which recipients must participate in the program, and how many hours a person must participate in order to comply with work requirements.

Under current Texas rules, most able-bodied food stamp recipients ages 16 to 59 who are unemployed or working fewer than 30 hours per week must register for the program. Mandatory registrants are required to participate in program activities for a minimum weekly average of at least 30 hours. Certain food stamp recipients who meet federally established exemption criteria are not required to participate, but may do so voluntarily as funding permits. A person who fails to participate in the required program activities for at least 30 hours weekly is disqualified from receiving food stamps for one month and longer for subsequent violations. If the person is the family's primary wage earner, the whole family is disqualified for one month for the first violation and up to six months for subsequent violations. The primary wage earner is permanently disqualified upon the third violation.

C.S.H.B. 886 exempts from the requirement to participate in the food stamp employment and training program authorized under federal law a person who meets certain average weekly hours worked or average weekly wage requirements.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

### **ANALYSIS**

C.S.H.B. 886 amends the Human Resources Code to exempt from the requirement to register for the food stamp employment and training program authorized under federal law a person who works an average of at least 20 hours each week or receives earnings that are equal to at least the minimum wage multiplied by 20. The bill requires a state agency that is affected by a provision of the bill to request a federal waiver or authorization if the agency determines that a waiver or authorization is necessary for the implementation of the provision, and it authorizes the agency to delay implementation until the federal waiver or authorization is obtained.

**EFFECTIVE DATE**

September 1, 2009.

**COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE**

C.S.H.B. 886 differs from the original by specifying a person is not required to participate, rather than register for, the food stamp employment and training program. The substitute differs from the original by specifying the exemption from the requirement is for a person who receives earnings that are equal to at least the minimum wage multiplied by 20, rather than an average weekly wage that is equal to at least 20 times the minimum wage.