

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
82R17094 EES-D

H.B. 710
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Health & Human Services
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Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Currently, electronic fingerprint-imaging or photo-imaging is required for a person who applies for and receives benefits under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program or the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly called food stamps, as a means of preventing the person from receiving benefits under more than one name. However, the fingerprint-imaging program has cost more to implement than expected and there are less costly methods of preventing this kind of fraud. Numerous state and national studies, including the formal evaluation of the Texas fingerprint-imaging pilot program by University of Texas researchers, have determined that fingerprint-imaging is unnecessary, not cost-effective, and can deter eligible families from participating in TANF and SNAP. Fingerprint-imaging requires an applicant for benefits to come to a local benefits office, undermining efforts to improve the efficiency of the eligibility system by reducing local office traffic and adding remote application options.

H.B. 710 seeks to address these issues by requiring the Health and Human Services Commission to use appropriate technology, rather than electronic fingerprint-imaging or photo-imaging, to help prevent welfare fraud.

H.B. 710 amends current law relating to verification of identity of applicants for benefits under and prevention of duplicate participation in the financial assistance and supplemental nutrition assistance programs.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter B, Chapter 31, Human Resources Code, by adding Section 31.0326, as follows:

Sec. 31.0326. VERIFICATION OF IDENTITY AND PREVENTION OF DUPLICATE PARTICIPATION. Requires the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to use appropriate technology to confirm the identity of applicants for benefits under the financial assistance program and prevent duplicate participation in the program by a person.

SECTION 2. Amends Chapter 33, Human Resources Code, by adding Section 33.0231, as follows:

Sec. 33.0231. VERIFICATION OF IDENTITY AND PREVENTION OF DUPLICATE PARTICIPATION. Requires HHSC to use appropriate technology to confirm the identity of applicants for benefits under the supplemental nutrition assistance program and prevent duplicate participation in the program by a person.

SECTION 3. Repealer: Section 31.0325 (Electronic Imaging Program), Human Resources Code.

SECTION 4. 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 waivers or authorizations are granted.

SECTION 5. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2011.