

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 710
By: Walle
Human Services
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

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.

C.S.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.

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. 710 amends the Human Resources Code to require the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to use appropriate technology to confirm the identity of applicants for benefits under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program and the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program and to prevent duplicate participation in those programs by a person. 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 the bill authorizes the agency to delay implementation until the federal waiver or authorization is obtained.

C.S.H.B. 710 repeals Section 31.0325, Human Resources Code, requiring HHSC to develop a program to prevent welfare fraud by using a type of electronic fingerprint-imaging or photo-imaging of adult and teen parent applicants for and adult and teen parent recipients of TANF or food stamp benefits.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2011.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE

C.S.H.B. 710 contains provisions not in the original requiring the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to use appropriate technology to confirm the identity of applicants for benefits under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program and the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) and to prevent duplicate participation in those programs by a person. The substitute omits a provision in the original requiring HHSC and each health and human services agency, on the bill's effective date, to discontinue using electronic fingerprint-imaging or photo-imaging of applicants for and recipients of financial assistance or food stamp benefits.