

By: King of Taylor

H.B. No. 2819

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

1 AN ACT
2 relating to the operation and efficiency of the eligibility
3 determination process for supplemental nutrition assistance
4 program benefits.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

6 SECTION 1. Chapter 33, Human Resources Code, is amended by
7 designating Sections 33.0005 through 33.028 as Subchapter A and
8 adding a subchapter heading to read as follows:

9 SUBCHAPTER A. NUTRITIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS IN GENERAL

10 SECTION 2. Chapter 33, Human Resources Code, is amended by
11 adding Subchapter B to read as follows:

12 SUBCHAPTER B. SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM:

13 ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION PROCESS EFFICIENCY

14 Sec. 33.051. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:

15 (1) "Commission" means the Health and Human Services
16 Commission.

17 (2) "Eligibility determination office" means an
18 office operating under the direction of the commission at which
19 supplemental nutrition assistance program applications are
20 processed.

21 (3) "Supplemental nutrition assistance program" means
22 the nutritional assistance program formerly referred to as the food
23 stamp program.

24 Sec. 33.052. APPLICATION ASSISTANCE. The commission shall

1 develop procedures applicable to local eligibility determination
2 offices to ensure that:

3 (1) the offices provide clear guidance on program
4 eligibility requirements and establish mechanisms, including
5 Internet and e-mail mechanisms, by which supplemental nutrition
6 assistance applicants and prospective applicants can obtain
7 answers to basic program-related questions;

8 (2) information is provided to each applicant by
9 e-mail, by telephone, or through the mail, as appropriate, about
10 information the applicant is required to submit for purposes of the
11 eligibility determination process; and

12 (3) office personnel support the eligibility
13 determination process by contacting an applicant in advance of an
14 applicant's scheduled interview to ensure the applicant
15 understands the documentation that must be presented at the
16 interview.

17 Sec. 33.053. USE OF TECHNOLOGY TO PROMOTE EFFICIENCY AND
18 FRAUD DETECTION. (a) The commission shall consider the
19 feasibility of using readily available document scanning
20 technology to reduce storage and maintenance costs and potential
21 loss of data by creating electronic case files for supplemental
22 nutrition assistance cases instead of maintaining physical files
23 for those cases. The commission shall use that technology if
24 determined feasible.

25 (b) The commission shall implement, if feasible, a risk
26 scoring program for supplemental nutrition assistance applications
27 to streamline the eligibility determination process, reduce

1 errors, and strengthen fraud detection. A risk scoring program
2 implemented by the commission must be capable of ranking
3 applications based on complexity so that:

4 (1) more experienced eligibility determination staff
5 members can be used to process more difficult cases and cases with
6 fraud characteristics; and

7 (2) applications ranked as low-risk on fraud
8 characteristics can be processed more expeditiously.

9 Sec. 33.054. WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT. The commission shall
10 improve its management of supplemental nutrition assistance
11 eligibility determination staff by:

12 (1) establishing clear performance expectations that
13 can serve as the basis for performance assessments;

14 (2) planning for anticipated staffing needs;

15 (3) revising policies regarding overtime and accrual
16 of compensatory time to ensure that eligibility determination staff
17 members have access to supervisors as necessary;

18 (4) assessing the effectiveness of training provided
19 to new eligibility determination staff members; and

20 (5) ensuring that the compensation scale is sufficient
21 to recruit qualified staff members and retain experienced staff
22 members.

23 Sec. 33.055. SYSTEM MANAGEMENT INFORMATION. (a) The
24 commission, in conjunction with state, regional, and local
25 eligibility determination offices, shall identify eligibility
26 determination system performance indicators with respect to which
27 data should periodically be collected. The commission shall

1 implement a process for collecting data on the identified
2 performance indicators.

3 (b) The commission shall maintain programming,
4 distribution, and management reports generated by the System for
5 Application, Verification, Eligibility, Referral, and Reporting
6 (SAVERR). In addition, the commission shall ensure that
7 eligibility determination offices generate periodic reports
8 regarding the number of pending supplemental nutrition assistance
9 applications and the number of those applications that have not
10 been processed within applicable timeliness standards.

11 (c) The commission shall use data collected under
12 Subsection (a) and the reports described by Subsection (b) to
13 develop and assess strategies for:

14 (1) streamlining the supplemental nutrition
15 assistance eligibility determination process;

16 (2) improving timeliness of eligibility
17 determinations; and

18 (3) accommodating increases in applications received.

19 SECTION 3. To the extent available for this purpose, the
20 Health and Human Services Commission shall use supplemental federal
21 funding provided for the administration of the supplemental
22 nutrition assistance program to implement Subchapter B, Chapter 33,
23 Human Resources Code, as added by this Act.

24 SECTION 4. This Act takes effect September 1, 2011.