

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.B. 224
By: Perry; West
Health & Human Services
5/28/2021
Enrolled

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

In 2018, Texas had the fifth-highest rate of senior food insecurity in the nation, with 11 percent of Texas seniors at risk for hunger. This figure has likely doubled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many are forced to choose between food and medicine, or food and utilities. Food insecurity in seniors exacerbates health problems and increases the cost of health care.

Many seniors and people with disabilities are eligible for the supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) but are not enrolled due to barriers in the application process, including difficulty applying online and confusing requirements.

S.B. 224 helps address this by requiring the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to implement a simplified application and recertification process for households comprised only of seniors (60+) or disabled individuals by:

waiving the recertification interview requirements, initial interview is still required;

using a simplified application form;

extending the enrollment period to 36 months; and

eliminating reporting requirements except for significant changes in income or assets.

If a person receives an increase in income, they must report that income to HHSC.

Many seniors on Medicaid are eligible for SNAP but are not enrolled. This bill includes a data matching section which would enable HHSC to identify and help enroll seniors eligible for SNAP. The bill allows HHSC to seek private funding and to contract with public or private entities for data matching.

(Original Author's/Sponsor's Statement of Intent)

S.B. 224 amends current law relating to simplified certification and recertification requirements for certain persons under the supplemental nutrition assistance program.

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 Section 33.015(a), Human Resources Code, to include Section 33.019 as an exception to certain initial eligibility requirements under the supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP).

SECTION 2. Amends Subchapter A, Chapter 33, Human Resources Code, by adding Section 33.019, as follows:

Sec. 33.019. SIMPLIFIED CERTIFICATION AND RECERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR CERTAIN SNAP APPLICANTS AND RECIPIENTS. (a) Requires the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to develop and implement simplified certification and recertification requirements for SNAP benefits for an individual who:

(1) is 60 years of age or older or is a person with a disability, as determined by HHSC rule;

(2) has no earned income; and

(3) resides in a household in which every individual residing in the household is 60 years of age or older or is a person with a disability, as determined by HHSC rule.

(b) Requires that the simplified requirements allow an individual described by this section to waive recertification interview requirements; simplify and reduce the number of verification requirements for certifying and recertifying eligibility to receive benefits on a shortened application form; and allow the individual to remain eligible for 36 months after certification and each recertification.

(c) Requires an individual described by this section to submit to HHSC a change reporting form every 12 months during the 36-month eligibility period and to report to HHSC, in accordance with federal law, when the individual receives an increase in income.

(d) Requires HHSC to, in a manner that complies with federal law, use data matching to inform eligible individuals described by this section who are receiving Medicaid benefits of their eligibility for SNAP benefits.

SECTION 3. Makes the application of Section 33.019, Human Resources Code, as added by this Act, prospective to January 1, 2022.

SECTION 4. Requires a state agency, if necessary for the implementation of a provision of this Act, to request a waiver or authorization from a federal agency, and authorizes delay of implementation until such a waiver or authorization is granted.

SECTION 5. Effective date: September 1, 2021.