By:  Hughes, Bettencourt S.B. No. 1138

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to a study on streamlining public safety net programs to reduce costs and improve outcomes for recipients under the programs.

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

SECTION 1.  DEFINITIONS. In this Act:

(1)  "Board" means the Legislative Budget Board.

(2)  "Safety net program" means any needs-based state or federal program that provides food, medical, or financial assistance to a recipient under the program, including:

(A)  the child health plan program under Chapter 62, Health and Safety Code;

(B)  the financial assistance program under Chapter 31, Human Resources Code;

(C)  the medical assistance program under Chapter 32, Human Resources Code;

(D)  the supplemental nutrition assistance program under Chapter 33, Human Resources Code;

(E)  the federal special supplemental nutrition program for women, infants, and children authorized by 42 U.S.C. Section 1786;

(F)  the Comprehensive Energy Assistance Program administered by the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs in accordance with the federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Act of 1981 (42 U.S.C. Section 8621 et seq.); and

(G)  the child care services program operated by the Texas Workforce Commission.

SECTION 2.  STUDY OF SAFETY NET PROGRAMS. (a) The board, in coordination with the Health and Human Services Commission and other applicable state agencies, shall conduct a study on safety net programs available in this state during the five-year period preceding the effective date of this Act for the purposes of:

(1)  streamlining program eligibility requirements, resources, and benefits;

(2)  improving outcomes for recipients under the programs; and

(3)  reducing costs to taxpayers.

(b)  The study must include:

(1)  an examination of:

(A)  the total amount of:

(i)  taxpayer revenue spent per safety net program;

(ii)  state money appropriated per program; and

(iii)  federal money received per program;

(B)  benefits provided under each program;

(C)  the number of recipients enrolled in or otherwise receiving benefits under each program;

(D)  aggregate demographic and socioeconomic information on recipients under each program including information relating to:

(i)  the average household income of recipients under each program;

(ii)  the employment status of recipients or, if recipients are dependents, the parents or guardians of recipients, under each program;

(iii)  the marital status of recipients or, if recipients are dependents, the parents or guardians of recipients, under each program; and

(iv)  the average number of dependents in recipient households under each program;

(E)  duplicative services and administrative activities among programs;

(F)  the percentage of state money appropriated to each program that is directly spent on providing benefits to recipients under the program and the percentage that is spent on staff and other administrative costs;

(G)  the percentage of recipients who become ineligible for each program because the recipient no longer meets the income eligibility requirements;

(H)  the number of individuals who begin, but do not complete, an application for benefits under each program and a statement of that number as a percentage of the overall number of recipients under each program;

(I)  the rate at which former recipients of each program later reapply for benefits under the program; and

(J)  the average length of time between an initial application for benefits and approval under each program;

(2)  a cost-benefit analysis that compares the costs of providing each program with the program's effectiveness at transitioning recipients to self-sufficiency; and

(3)  a statistical analysis of the data collected under Subdivisions (1) and (2).

(c)  The board shall collect any information necessary to conduct the study from each state agency that administers or operates a safety net program. At the request of the board, each agency shall submit the requested information to the board within a reasonable time, as prescribed by the board.

(d)  The board shall conduct the study and prepare the report required by Section 3 of this Act using existing resources.

SECTION 3.  REPORT ON SAFETY NET PROGRAMS. Not later than September 1, 2022, the board shall:

(1)  submit a report on the board's findings and recommendations to the legislature, including recommendations on how to:

(A)  simplify and streamline each safety net program;

(B)  improve outcomes of each program; and

(C)  lower costs to taxpayers for safety net programs; and

(2)  post the report on the board's Internet website.

SECTION 4.  EXPIRATION. This Act expires January 1, 2023.

SECTION 5.  EFFECTIVE DATE. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this Act takes effect September 1, 2021.