



Senate

General Assembly

File No. 360

January Session, 2003

Substitute Senate Bill No. 1053

Senate, April 15, 2003

The Committee on Human Services reported through SEN. HANDLEY of the 4th Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the Senate, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

AN ACT CONCERNING ADOPTION OF A STANDARD UTILITY ALLOWANCE BY THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. Section 17b-105a of the general statutes is amended by
2 adding subsection (c) as follows (*Effective October 1, 2003*):

3 (NEW) (c) The Commissioner of Social Services, pursuant to 7 CFR
4 273.9, shall implement the federal option to mandate the use of a
5 standard utility allowance, to be used in place of actual utility costs, for
6 purposes of calculating the excess shelter deduction of applicants for,
7 or recipients of, food stamp program benefits.

This act shall take effect as follows:

Section 1	October 1, 2003
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HS Joint Favorable Subst.

The following fiscal impact statement and bill analysis are prepared for the benefit of members of the General Assembly, solely for the purpose of information, summarization, and explanation, and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either House thereof for any purpose:

OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact:

Agency Affected	Fund-Type	FY 04 \$	FY 05 \$
Department of Social Services	GF - Cost	Minimal	Minimal

Municipal Impact: None

Explanation

This bill requires the Commissioner of the Department of Social Services (DSS) to use a standard utility allowance in place of actual utility costs in determining food stamp eligibility and benefit levels. This change is expected to result in a nominal increase in benefit levels for the State-Funded Food Stamp program. There are approximately 500 people currently enrolled in this program.

OLR Bill Analysis

sSB 1053

AN ACT CONCERNING ADOPTION OF A STANDARD UTILITY ALLOWANCE BY THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**SUMMARY:**

This bill requires the Department of Social Services (DSS) commissioner to implement the federal option to mandate use of a standard utility allowance instead of actual utility costs in calculating the excess shelter deduction for applicants' eligibility for the federal Food Stamp program, which the state administers. The bill's change would also apply to the state-funded program, which provides food stamps for legal aliens who do not qualify for the federal program and which follows the same rules as the federal program.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2003

BACKGROUND***Food Stamp Program***

The Food Stamp program, run by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service, is fully funded by the federal government, but administered at the state level by DSS. While the federal government determines most features of the program, it allows states some options in a few areas. One of these is that, when calculating income deductions for eligibility purposes, they may, with federal approval, either require use of a standard utility allowance or allow people to choose a standard allowance or actual costs (7 CFR 273.9(d)(6)(ii) and (iii)).

Current State Regulations

Current state regulations give people a choice of using their actual utility costs or a standard allowance (currently \$287) if their utilities are not included in rent. This amount is added to other shelter costs and amounts above 50% of their income ("excess shelter costs") after certain other deductions are subtracted from income. (DSS Uniform Policy Manual § 5035.15).

COMMITTEE ACTION

Human Services Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 18 Nay 0