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Testimony of Senator Sam S.F. Caligiuri
Raised Bill 5399, AAC Notice By The Department Of Social Services Regarding Repayment For Services
Human Services Committee
March 11, 2010

Senator Doyle, Representative Walker, Senator Kane, Representative Gibbons and Members of the Human Services Committee, my name is Sam Caligiuri, State Senator from the 16th District.

I am testifying today in support of **Raised Bill 5399**, An Act Concerning Notice By The Department Of Social Services Regarding Repayment For Services. This bill would require the Department of Social Services to disclose and explain to applicants for aid all provisions and circumstances under which the applicant would be required to repay the state for the cost of services received.

While I am pleased to see this legislation before the committee, I would like to recommend certain modifications. The underlying bill would require DSS to notify only the applicant for state aid. Currently, the state is empowered to recoup assistance received not only from the applicant, but also from certain relatives and liable third parties.

This issue was brought to my attention by a constituent. He had a child over 20 years ago. He and the mother were never married; however, as I understand it, he supported his child by paying all court ordered child support, providing medical insurance and providing other assistance for the child. His child lived with the mother until the age of 15 at which time the child came to live with him. In March of 2009, when the constituent began the process of refinancing his house, he learned that the state had placed a lien on his home for the repayment of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) benefits paid to the child's mother.

His discovery of a lien on his home was the first time he had become aware of the fact that he could be held liable for repaying the assistance the state had provided to his child's mother. While I understand the state's desire to receive legal repayment for state aid from any potentially liable relative or third party, the state is not currently required to notify these individuals that a debt is accruing for which they may be held responsible.

I would respectfully request that House Bill 5399 be amended to require the state to notify any relative of a state aid beneficiary or any other potentially liable third party who might be required to make a repayment for aid received, of the fact that he or she can be held liable by the state for the repayment of such state aid.

I thank you for consideration of this proposed legislation and look forward to working with the committee in moving this bill forward.