

Human Services Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-192

AN ACT CONCERNING EMPLOYMENT SERVICES ASSESSMENT
INTERVIEWS AND SANCTIONS FOR TEMPORARY FAMILY ASSISTANCE
BENEFICIARIES WHO FAIL TO COMPLY WITH EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Title: REQUIREMENTS.

Vote Date: 3/17/2022

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/8/2022

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Human Services Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This legislation requires the Department of Social Services (DSS) to speedily conduct an application interview with a Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) applicant to determine whether they are exempt from work requirements under the employment services program. DSS must then act to schedule the initial employment services assessment interview within 10 business days of the application interview, rather than within 10 days of the application being filed, for TFA applicants who are subject to work requirements. Furthermore, this bill requires DSS to reduce benefits by excluding the noncompliant family when calculating the family's monthly benefit until the person complies, becomes exempt, or demonstrates good cause for failure to comply.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Commissioner Deidre S. Gifford, Department of Social Services:

Commissioner Deidre S. Gifford and the Department of Social Services (DSS) are in favor of this bill. The testimony expresses that DSS proposes to (1) provide Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) program applicants with the option to complete an application interview over the phone and (2) change the way that non-compliance penalties are calculated. The Commissioner states DSS under current law, first noncompliance is 25% benefit reduction for 3 months, second is 35% benefit reduction for 3 months, third or subsequent is termination of benefits for 3 months under the bill. The proposal eliminates a permanent program termination penalty that applies under current law whenever someone fails to attend a

scheduled employment services assessment interview or appointment related to the establishment of an employment services plan, or commits any employment services violation during an extension of TFA benefits. These latter two changes will ensure that the children in families who are sanctioned for noncompliance do not lose access to funding required for basic needs such as diapers, clothing, and shelter.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Alison Weir, Policy Advocate and Attorney Greater Hartford Legal Aid is in support of this legislation. This bill restructures the existing sanctions as well as provisions of the Temporary Family Assistance program to better target the family member who is in noncompliance. The testimony states the current sanction regime indiscriminately affects the entire family and can result in the loss of all benefits for the entire family for three months. This leads the unjust result of depriving a family of what is often the only income available to them. The proposed revision is much more targeted and just and follows the trend of states moving away from whole family sanction regimes.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Connecticut Resident, David Godbout, opposes this bill. As stated in the testimony, all proposed bills within the Connecticut General Assembly are in violation of citizens' 4th Amendment Rights, citing the fact that many spaces in the Capitol and Legislative Office Buildings are currently restricted.

Reported by: Taylor Williams

Date: 03/18/22