

Senate, March 25, 1998. The Committee on Appropriations reported through SEN. CRISCO, 17th DIST., Chairman of the Committee on the part of the Senate, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR LEGAL IMMIGRANTS.

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

1 Section 1. (NEW) (a) The Commissioner of
2 Social Services shall establish a food assistance
3 program for individuals entering the United States
4 prior to April 1, 1998, whose immigrant status
5 meets the eligibility requirements of the federal
6 Food Stamp Act of 1977, as amended, but who are no
7 longer eligible for food stamps solely due to
8 their immigrant status under Public Law 104-193.
9 Individuals who enter the United States after
10 April 1, 1998, must have resided in the state for
11 six months prior to becoming eligible for the
12 state program. The commissioner may administer
13 such program in accordance with the provisions of
14 the federal food stamp program, except those
15 pertaining to the determination of immigrant
16 status under Public Law 104-193.

17 (b) The amount of the initial assistance
18 provided to individuals under this section shall
19 be determined at the commissioner's discretion,
20 based on one of the following methodologies: (1) A
21 calculated benefit amount for each case; (2) a
22 basic benefit amount for all cases; or (3) a

23 continuation of the benefit amount previously
24 received under the federal Food Stamp Act of 1977,
25 as amended, prior to discontinuance. Individuals
26 may be eligible for retroactive payments back to
27 April 1, 1998.

28 (c) Not later than April 1, 1999, the
29 commissioner shall provide assistance to an
30 individual under this section in an amount equal
31 to the amount the individual would be eligible to
32 receive under the federal Food Stamp Act of 1977,
33 as amended.

34 (d) The commissioner shall terminate
35 assistance under this section to any individual
36 whose federal food stamp benefits have been
37 restored.

38 (e) The commissioner shall implement the
39 policies and procedures necessary to carry out the
40 provisions of this section while in the process of
41 adopting such policies and procedures in
42 regulation form, provided notice of intent to
43 adopt the regulations is published in the
44 Connecticut Law Journal within twenty days after
45 implementation. Such policies and procedures shall
46 be valid until the time final regulations are
47 effective.

48 Sec. 2. The sum of \$1,720,000 is appropriated
49 to the Department of Social Services from the
50 General Fund, for the fiscal year ending June 30,
51 1998, for the food assistance program established
52 pursuant to section 1 of this act.

53 Sec. 3. This act shall take effect April 1,
54 1998.

55 HS COMMITTEE VOTE: YEA 15 NAY 0 JF C/R APP
56 APP COMMITTEE VOTE: YEA 31 NAY 1 JFS

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"THE FOLLOWING FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT AND BILL ANALYSIS ARE PREPARED FOR THE BENEFIT OF MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, SOLELY FOR PURPOSES OF INFORMATION, SUMMARIZATION AND EXPLANATION AND DO NOT REPRESENT THE INTENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OR EITHER HOUSE THEREOF FOR ANY PURPOSE."

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FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT - BILL NUMBER sSB 299

STATE IMPACT	Significant Cost, see explanation below
MUNICIPAL IMPACT	None
STATE AGENCY(S)	Department of Social Services

EXPLANATION OF ESTIMATES:

This bill creates a food assistance program for those legal immigrants who are no longer eligible for the Federal food stamp program due to changes in the federal law. The Office of Fiscal Analysis estimates that this extension of benefits will cost approximately \$1,576,846 in FY98 and \$5,907,384 in FY99. This estimate assumes implementation of this program in April of 1998, with full year costs incurred in FY99. The bill appropriates \$1,720,000 in FY98 to cover the costs of the program.

The cost estimate assumes a caseload of participating legal immigrants of 4,518. This caseload is based on a total of 9,890 non-exempt legal immigrants in Connecticut potentially subject to the food stamp cuts, as reported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Consumer Service. The total potential caseload was then adjusted for participation rate, forty quarter exemptions, naturalization rate, and assumed caseload decline.

The Department of Social Services estimates that the average monthly food assistance benefit will be \$99. This equates to a total monthly cost to the state for the benefits of \$447,282. The Department also estimates that \$100,000 will be required in FY98 for additional

data processing costs. A total of 14 people would be required to administer the program, resulting in an annual cost of \$540,000.

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OLR BILL ANALYSIS

sSB 299

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR LEGAL IMMIGRANTS

SUMMARY: This bill requires the Department of Social Services (DSS) commissioner to establish a state funded food assistance program for legal immigrants who would be eligible for federal Food Stamps benefits if the 1996 federal welfare reform law (P.L. 104-193) did not exclude them because of their immigrant status. It appropriates \$1,720,000 for the program. Individuals must have entered the U.S. before April 1, 1998 or have lived in the state for six months before they can be eligible for benefits.

The commissioner can operate the program under the same rules governing the federal program except those barring legal immigrants from receiving benefits. From April 1, 1998 to March 31, 1999, the commissioner, at her discretion, can set the amount of assistance (1) on a case-by-case basis, (2) at a certain amount for all cases, or (3) at the amount the recipient would have received under the federal program. But, by April 1, 1999, she must provide the same amount of benefits provided under the federal program. Recipients are eligible for benefits retroactively to April 1, 1998. The commissioner must end assistance for any recipient whose federal Food Stamps benefits are restored.

The bill requires the commissioner to implement policies and procedures to operate the program while preparing regulations. She must publish her intent to adopt regulations within 20 days after implementing the policies and procedures.

EFFECTIVE DATE: April 1, 1998

BACKGROUND

Food Stamp Eligibility Under the 1996 Federal Welfare Reform Law

All legal immigrants lost federal Food Stamps benefits under the 1996 federal welfare reform law except for: (1) U.S. Armed Forces service members and veterans, their spouses, and their dependent children; (2) refugees and asylum seekers for their first five years in the U.S.; and (3) legal permanent residents with a 10-year work history in the U.S. (the 10 years can consist of the combined work history of all family members).

State Purchases of Federal Food Stamps for Legal Immigrants

The 1997 federal Supplemental Appropriations Act (P.L. 105-18) allows states to purchase food stamps from the federal government for use in a state funded food assistance program for legal immigrants. States must purchase stamps at 100% of their face value. Under the federal Food Stamps program, the federal government pays 100% the cost of the food stamp benefit and 50% of DSS's administrative costs. The proposed FY 1998-99 federal budget includes provisions that would restore federal Food Stamps benefits to legal immigrant with families children and other specified legal immigrants.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Human Services Committee

Joint Favorable Report
Yea 15 Nay 0

Appropriations Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute
Yea 31 Nay 0