

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2437

As Reported by House Committee On:
Health & Human Services Appropriations & Oversight

Title: An act relating to repealing the early supplemental security income transition project.

Brief Description: Repealing the early supplemental security income transition project.

Sponsors: Representatives Dickerson and Hinkle; by request of Department of Social and Health Services.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Health & Human Services Appropriations & Oversight: 1/26/12, 1/31/12 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Repeals the Early Supplemental Security Income Project.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES APPROPRIATIONS & OVERSIGHT

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Dickerson, Chair; Appleton, Vice Chair; Johnson, Ranking Minority Member; Schmick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Cody, Green, Harris, Kagi, Overstreet, Pettigrew and Walsh.

Staff: Melissa Palmer (786-7388).

Background:

Assistance Programs.

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) provides assistance under the Aged, Blind, or Disabled (ABD) Cash Assistance Program and the Pregnant Women Assistance Program to persons who meet eligibility requirements. Persons must meet income, resource, and incapacity standards. For the ABD Program, the incapacity standard includes having a medical or mental health impairment that is likely to meet federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) disability standards. A person is ineligible for the ABD Program if there has been a final determination that he or she is not eligible for federal SSI. Persons eligible for

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these programs receive both medical assistance and a cash grant. The maximum cash grant for one person is \$197 per month. Prior to November 1, 2011, clients who were likely to meet SSI disability standards were served as part of the Expedited component of the Disability Lifeline Program.

Medical Care Services.

A person is eligible for Medical Care Services (MCS) if he or she meets the income, resource, and incapacity standards, which include having a physical or mental incapacity that will continue for at least 90 days preventing gainful employment. Incapacitated persons who are eligible for MCS receive medical assistance and do not receive a cash grant, but are referred to Housing and Essential Needs (HEN) services. A MCS client may be eligible for, but is not entitled to, housing assistance through HEN services. Prior to November 1, 2011, clients who were incapacitated for 90 days or longer were served as part of the Unemployable component of the Disability Lifeline Program.

Early Supplemental Security Income Transition Project.

Chapter 8, Laws of 2010 First Special Session (Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill 2782) established the Early SSI Transition Project (SSI Project). The SSI Project required the DSHS to begin implementation in King, Pierce, and Spokane counties and expand statewide no later than October 1, 2011.

The SSI Project is to move persons likely eligible for SSI benefits from MCS or the ABD Program to SSI as quickly as practicable.

The contractor is responsible for managing the incapacity evaluations to provide timely access to medical and behavioral health evaluations and standardizing health care providers' conduct of incapacity exams, maintaining a centralized appointment and clinical data system, assisting clients in obtaining incapacity examinations, and screening clients that have not been transferred to the ABD Program to see if those clients are likely to meet the federal SSI disability standard. Additionally, the contractor facilitates the SSI application process for clients likely to meet the SSI disability standard.

The contract for the SSI Project expired December 31, 2011. The DSHS stopped referring clients under the SSI Project in October 2011. The DSHS was to report to the Governor and legislative committees regarding the performance of the SSI Project by December 1, 2011.

Summary of Bill:

The Early Supplemental Security Income Transition Project is repealed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This approach under the Early Supplemental Security Income Transition Project (SSI Project) did not work out as well as anticipated. Because of this, the SSI Project requirements should be repealed. The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) contracted with Community Health Plan of Washington (CHPW) for the provisions of the SSI Project. The DSHS had a great collaborative experience with CHPW as a result of the SSI Project, which focused on working with the Disability Lifeline Program recipients. However, many of these clients are transient and, as a result, about 72 percent of the cases were returned to the DSHS from CHPW as "closed" or "unable to pursue."

The new Aged, Blind, or Disabled Assistance Program motivated the DSHS to do a better job of assessing applicants and clients for disabilities from the beginning. The DSHS' new process is now more effective in assessing clients for circumstances that would make a person likely to be eligible for Supplemental Security Income. The DSHS is still challenged by the circumstances that clients present as these circumstances are not easily identified. The DSHS will continue to be persistent in its efforts to assess clients from the beginning.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: David Stillman, Department of Social and Health Services.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.