
**Early Learning & Human Services
Committee**

HB 2505

Brief Description: Requiring photo identification on electronic benefit cards.

Sponsors: Representatives Klippert, Haler, Condotta and Buys.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires that electronic benefit cards include photo identification of the person authorized to use the card.

Hearing Date: 1/29/14

Staff: Luke Wickham (786-7146).

Background:

Individuals in Washington may apply for public assistance either at a Community Services Office or online. There are a number of different programs that provide benefits to individuals based on certain eligibility criteria. These programs include the Basic Food Program (BFP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and the Aged, Blind, or Disabled Program (ABD).

Basic Food Program.

The BFP provides benefits under the federally funded Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps) and the state-funded Food Assistance Program for legal immigrants who meet federal income requirements for eligibility but do not meet federal immigrant eligibility requirements for SNAP.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is a federal block grant established under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. States use TANF block grants to operate their own programs. State programs differ, but they operate in accordance to provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives and to end the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation and work.

Aged/Blind/Disabled.

The Aged, Blind, or Disabled Program (ABD) provides cash assistance for persons who are, respectively, age 65 or older, blind, or who have a long-term medical condition that is likely to meet federal disability criteria. In addition to medical benefits, persons receive a monthly cash benefit.

Electronic Benefit Cards.

Public assistance benefits are provided to recipients through an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card. The benefit amount is electronically added to the card each month. The EBT card can be used at ATMs and also at stores through a point of sale machine, similar to how debit cards are used.

In 2011 the Legislature passed Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5921 (ESSB 5921). Provisions in that bill placed restrictions on the use of an EBT card. A person receiving public assistance benefits is prohibited from using an EBT card or cash obtained with an EBT card to participate in a gambling activity, a parimutuel wagering activity, or to purchase lottery tickets. The DSHS must notify EBT cardholders that using an EBT card or cash obtained with an EBT card for any of the prohibited activities could result in legal proceedings and the forfeiture of all cash benefits. Only the recipient or the recipient's authorized representative may use an EBT card or EBT card benefits and the use may only be for the respective benefit purposes. The recipient may not sell, or attempt to sell, exchange, or donate an EBT card or any benefits to any other person or entity. The penalty for a first violation of the prohibitions outlined in ESSB 5921 is a class 4 civil infraction. Second and subsequent violations constitute a class 3 civil infraction.

Fraud.

The Division of Fraud Investigations (DFI) within the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) is responsible for investigating allegations of fraud by applicants and recipients of public assistance programs and for investigating allegations of fraud by vendors with whom the DSHS has a contract to provide services to DSHS clients. The DFI partners with the Economic Services Administration Community Services Division to investigate current eligibility for public assistance.

Summary of Bill:

An electronic benefit card issued to a person receiving public assistance must contain a photo identification of the person authorized to use the card. The DSHS must consider using the photographic databases of the Department of Licensing (DOL) as a cost-saving measure. The DSHS shall work with the DOL to access and cross-share facial recognition data and resources for the purposes of identifying potential fraud and report any fraud that is believed to have been committed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 22, 2014.

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