

HCS HB 2330 -- TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE BENEFITS FOR NEEDY FAMILIES

SPONSOR: Jones, 89 (Brandom)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Special Committee on General Laws by a vote of 5 to 1.

This substitute requires the Department of Social Services to develop a program to screen and test work-eligible applicants for or work-eligible recipients of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program benefits who the department has reasonable cause to believe, based on the screening, engage in the illegal use of controlled substances. Applicants or recipients who test positive for the use of a controlled substance after an administrative hearing will be declared ineligible for TANF benefits for three years beginning on the date of the administrative hearing decision. The department will refer individuals who tested positive to a substance abuse treatment program approved by the Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse within the Department of Mental Health. Any member of a household including a person who has been declared ineligible for TANF benefits, if otherwise eligible, will continue to receive protective or vendor payments to a third-party payee.

FISCAL NOTE: Estimated Cost on General Revenue Fund of Unknown up to \$5,284,864 in FY 2009, Unknown up to \$4,150,063 in FY 2010, and Unknown up to \$4,271,565 in FY 2011. No impact on Other State Funds in FY 2009, FY 2010, and FY 2011.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that children of substance abusers and drug users have shown horrible behavioral issues in school. In its original federal grant, temporary assistance for needy families allows individual states to test for controlled substances among applicants and recipients of the aid and to levy sanctions against a person testing positive. Requiring the parents of these children to enter a drug treatment facility helps the children and communities.

Testifying for the bill were Representatives Brandom and Wilson (130).

OPPOSERS: Those who oppose the bill say that the denial of a parent's benefit hurts the children of these substance abusers. A family must have at least one child to even qualify for temporary assistance; and therefore, if any recipient fails a test, a child's benefit will be reduced or eliminated. The bill also makes an assumption that poor or impoverished individuals should be tested for drugs, and the true issue is that anyone receiving public assistance should be tested.

Testifying against the bill were Missouri Catholic Conference; and Missouri Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say that we cannot address all public assistance programs with drug testing because we cannot alter the eligibility requirements for the federal Medicaid and food stamp programs.

Testifying on the bill was Department of Social Services.