

HB 466 -- MO HEALTHNET BENEFITS

SPONSOR: Engler

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Children and Families by a vote of 10 to 0.

This bill modifies the amount of cash, securities, or other total non-exempt assets an aged or disabled participant is allowed to retain in order to qualify for MO HealthNet benefits. Currently the limit for a single person is \$1,000 and the limit for a married couple is \$2,000. The bill increases the limit to \$2,000 for a single person and \$4,000 for a married couple.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that society has failed to create an accessible pathway for individuals with disabilities. Individuals with disabilities are far more likely to live in poverty than the rest of the general population. Individuals with disabilities have support needs that only Medicaid can provide. No other insurance coverage pays for personal care services. People who need these services are kept poor by current policies when they could otherwise make money if they were able to keep more of their income. The fiscal note for the bill is inflated because most everyone who needs services has spent their assets down to be eligible for Medicaid. The disability determination for Medicaid is rigorous, plus applicants must meet the income limit of 85% of the federal poverty level, and it is unknown how many individuals already have insurance coverage. The average cost per participant chosen in the fiscal note is likely higher than what would actually occur because if the individuals who are not currently enrolled are not receiving services through Medicaid they likely don't need highly sophisticated, high cost services. The majority of people that will be affected by the bill will be those already on Medicaid who want to be able to save more money so they can deal with unexpected expenses like car repairs.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Engler; Reginald Turnbull, Mo Chapter-National Academy Of Elder Law Attorneys; Misty Snodgrass, Missouri Coalition Of Community Mental Health Centers; Cathy Brown, Paraquad; Jay Hardenbrook, Aarp; Sarah Topp, Coalition Of Service Providers Of St. Charles County; Jeanette Mott Oxford, Missouri Association For Social Welfare; and Leslie Anderson, Services For Independent Living.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.