

HB 1795 -- ELIGIBILITY DATA VERIFICATION

SPONSOR: Haefner

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Emerging Issues by a vote of 11 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Select Committee on General Laws by a vote of 7 to 2.

By January 1, 2017, this bill requires the Department of Social Services to procure and enter into a competitively bid contract with a contractor for the purpose of providing verification of initial and ongoing eligibility data for assistance under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; Women, Infants, and Children Supplemental Nutrition Program; Child Care Assistance Program; and MO HealthNet Program. The contractor must conduct data matches using specified information relevant to eligibility against public records and other data sources to verify eligibility data. The contractor must evaluate the income, resources, and assets of each applicant and recipient no less than quarterly. In addition to quarterly eligibility data verification, the contractor must identify on a monthly basis any program participants who have died, moved out of state, or have been incarcerated longer than 90 days.

Upon completing an eligibility data verification of an applicant or recipient, the contractor is required to notify the department of the results, except that the contractor is prohibited from verifying the eligibility data of persons residing in long-term care facilities whose income and resources were at or below the applicable financial eligibility standards at the time of their last review. The department must make an eligibility determination within 20 business days of receipt of the notification. The bill requires the department to retain final authority over eligibility determinations and the contractor must keep a record of all eligibility data verifications communicated to the department.

The department and contractor must file a joint report on a yearly basis, within 30 days of the end of each calendar year, to the Governor, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the President Pro Tem of the Senate. The bill specifies the information that must be included in the report.

This bill is the same as HB 985 (2015).

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that this bill would increase efficiency, reduce fraud and free up caseworkers to focus on more important aspects of their jobs. The contractors considered under this bill would have access to more advanced technology and private databases in order to obtain information about an individual

receiving or applying for assistance. This information would assist the department in determining the individual's eligibility. The contractor would only be responsible for providing data, the department would still make all eligibility decisions.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Haefner; Maximus; RELX, Inc.; and the Missouri Alliance For Freedom.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that there is little evidence of fraud under the current system. There is always a risk that the contractor would have a financial incentive to cut off access to health coverage or other benefits. There is no guarantee that the contractor would be more efficient or more accurate in its data collection than the department.

Testifying against the bill was Empowerment Missouri.

OTHERS: The Missouri Department of Social Services was present and offered to answer any questions.