

HCS HB 1856 -- MO HEALTHNET WORK REQUIREMENTS

SPONSOR: Trent

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Children and Families by a vote of 7 to 2. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules- Legislative Oversight by a vote of 9 to 3.

This bill requires a MO HealthNet participant to work, participate in a work program, volunteer, or participate in a workfare program, unless the participant is under 19 years of age, 64 years of age or older, physically or mentally unfit to work, a parent or caretaker of a child under one year of age, a parent or caretaker of a child with a disability, receiving unemployment, or participating in a drug addiction or alcoholic treatment and rehabilitation program.

The Department of Social Services must submit any state plan or waiver necessary, and these provisions will not become effective until approval of the state plan or waiver.

This bill specifies that an individual shall be ineligible to participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) during any month such individual is delinquent in any child support payment. A disqualification will only apply to the individual and not to the entire household. For reasons listed in the bill, an individual who is delinquent in child support may be exempted from the provisions of this bill.

This bill is similar to SB 610 (2018).

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that work is the best pathway to get out of poverty, by gaining skills and confidence to move up the economic ladder. This bill will reduce poverty, help people lead more fulfilling lives, and save money for the state.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Trent; Concerned Women for America of Missouri; and the Opportunity Solutions Project.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that this bill should specifically exempt pregnant women from the work requirements, which is a federal requirement. A custodial parent would be required to work under this bill, but may not have access to safe childcare. There is inadequate staffing or technology to implement these requirements.

Testifying against the bill were Planned Parenthood Advocates in Missouri; Empower Missouri; Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City; Missouri Community Action Network; and Missouri Health

Care for All.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill explained that the current technology that runs the MO HealthNet system is antiquated. The state may have trouble getting a waiver to implement work requirements.

Testifying on the bill were Department of Social Services and Lucas Caldwell-McMillan, Legal Services of Eastern Missouri.