

HB 338 -- TANF BENEFITS

SPONSOR: Cook

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Government Efficiency and Downsizing by a vote of 7 to 3. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules- Administrative Oversight by a vote of 6 to 3.

This bill changes the law regarding the use of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits via electronic benefit transfer (EBT) transaction. The bill adds pornography to the list of items that are prohibited from being purchased with TANF or SNAP benefits using an EBT card.

The bill requires that upon a first violation of the prohibition against using TANF benefits via an EBT card in a prohibited establishment or to purchase prohibited items, a TANF recipient will be disqualified from receiving benefits for three months; upon a second violation, the recipient will be disqualified for six months; and upon any third or subsequent violation, the recipient will be disqualified for five years. An individual may resume participation in the program at the end of the disqualification period by applying again.

The bill prohibits a recipient of TANF or SNAP from using his or her EBT card at any automated teller machine (ATM) to receive cash back on a purchase or to otherwise access the benefits as cash. If the Department of Social Services determines that a waiver is necessary for implementation of the prohibition, the Department will apply for a waiver from the Federal Department of Health and Human Services.

The bill repeals the provisions regarding pilot projects in certain counties to provide EBT cards to public assistance recipients.

This bill is the same as HB 2085 (2022).

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that it is reasonable to set up guardrails to ensure that taxpayer money is being spent properly and for its intended purposes. Taxpayers should not be expected to foot the bill for the items described in this legislation. Public assistance is designed to be temporary and minimal so consequences for its abuse are reasonable.

Testifying in person for the bill was Representative Cook.

OPPOSERS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.