

HCS HB 315 -- PUBLIC ASSISTANCE BENEFITS

SPONSOR: Cook

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Government Efficiency by a vote of 12 to 4 with 1 voting present. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules-Legislative by a vote of 6 to 2 with 1 voting present.

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for HB 315.

This bill modifies 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 can resume participation in the program at the end of the disqualification period by applying and qualifying again.

The bill prohibits a recipient of TANF or SNAP from using his or her EBT card at any 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 also repeals provisions regarding pilot projects in certain counties to provide EBT cards to public assistance recipients.

This bill is the same as HB 1560 (2024) and HB 338(2023).

The following is a summary of the public testimony from the committee hearing. The testimony was based on the introduced version of the bill.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that there is abuse of the system and this provides a clear penalty for those caught using the funds for prohibited purposes. Often recipients would go from an ATM with

money received under this program and spend it on things that would not be eligible.

Testifying in person for the bill were Representative Cook

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that this is a vital program that helps over 5,000 families in the State. There are certain circumstances where access to money from an ATM is necessary and examples were provided such as paying rent, babysitters, and for use at laundry mats. This is a national issue and if Missouri has its own laws then people may cross state lines.

Testifying in person against the bill were Missouri Grocers Association; Jamie Skinner; Missouri Petroleum and Convenience Association; and Christine Woody, Empower Missouri.

This bill is similar to HB 1560 (2024) and HB 338 (2023).

Written testimony has been submitted for this bill. The full written testimony and witnesses testifying online can be found under Testimony on the bill page on the House website.