

SUBJECT: Food stamp outreach and eligibility determination pilot at a retail location

COMMITTEE: Human Services — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 6 ayes — Rose, S. King, Herrero, Hughes, Naishtat, Parker

0 nays

3 absent — J. Davis, Eissler, Pierson

WITNESSES: (*On original version:*)

For — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Carrie Kroll, Texas Pediatric Society; Michelle Romero, Texas Medical Association; Bryan Sperry, Children's Hospital Association of Texas)

Against — None

(*On committee substitute:*)

For — Jodie Smith, Texans Care for Children (*Registered, but did not testify:* Celia Hagert, Center for Public Policy Priorities)

Against — None

BACKGROUND: The Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) administers the food stamp program on behalf of the state. The food stamp program is a federal food assistance program that helps low income individuals obtain a nutritionally adequate diet. The direct benefits issued by the food stamp program are 100 percent federally funded. In 2004, 58 percent of eligible people participated in the food stamp program.

DIGEST: CSHB 3571 would create a pilot program in which a South Texas region retail business would enter into an agreement with HHSC to support outreach efforts and eligibility determination for the food stamp program.

The executive commissioner of the HHSC would adopt rules regarding requirements for the participating retail business. The agreement with the retail business would adhere to state and federal rules governing the food stamp program and could require the business to:

- provide informational materials to customers and other persons regarding the food stamp programs;
- perform food stamp outreach services; and
- provide space at the retail locations for HHSC staff and contractors to conduct outreach efforts and eligibility determination.

By September 1, 2008, HHSC would submit a report to the Legislature, including an evaluation of the pilot program and its effects on the food stamp program. The report would include recommendations regarding continuation or expansion of the pilot program.

If any provision of the bill required a federal waiver or authorization, HHSC would request the waiver or authorization and could delay implementation until the request was granted.

CSHB 3571 would take effect September 1, 2007.

NOTES:

The filed version of HB 3571 would have created partnerships between HHSC and private entities, including retail and other businesses, to conduct outreach efforts for CHIP, TANF, Medicaid, and food stamps. The bill as filed would not have been a pilot program nor would it have been limited to the South Texas region.

According to the fiscal note, HHSC anticipates no significant fiscal impact from the bill other than a possible increase in enrollment from the outreach effort.