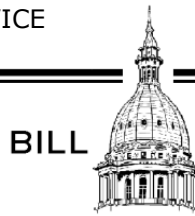




Senate Fiscal Agency
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BILL ANALYSIS

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Senate Bill 276 (Substitute S-1 as reported)
Sponsor: Senator Joe Hune
Committee: Families, Seniors and Human Services

(enrolled version)

Date Completed: 6-18-13

RATIONALE

The Social Welfare Act requires the Department of Human Services (DHS) to establish and administer the Family Independence Program (FIP) to provide temporary assistance to families who are making efforts to achieve independence. Unless an individual is exempt, he or she is required to participate in a work participation program in order to receive cash assistance. The current work participation program, called the PATH program, took effect on January 1, 2013, replacing the former JET (Jobs, Education, and Training) program. Depending on a recipient's circumstances, PATH program activities may include paid employment, efforts to obtain employment, or unpaid work assignments. It has been suggested that the Act should include participation in community service among the activities that may be required for PATH participation.

CONTENT

The bill would amend the Social Welfare Act to include community service within work participation program activities. The bill also would refer to the PATH program instead of the JET program. "PATH program" would mean the "Path: Partnership. Accountability. Training. Hope. Work Partnership Program".

Generally, when the DHS determines that an individual is eligible to receive FIP assistance, it must determine whether he or she is eligible to participate or exempt from participating in the work participation program. An individual is exempt he or she meets certain criteria based on age, medical condition, and related factors.

The DHS must develop, and set forth in a recipient's family self-sufficiency plan, the particular activities the recipient is required or authorized to participate in, the number of hours of work required for, and other details of, the PATH program. The bill would include community service as an activity.

MCL 400.57f

ARGUMENTS

(Please note: The arguments contained in this analysis originate from sources outside the Senate Fiscal Agency. The Senate Fiscal Agency neither supports nor opposes legislation.)

Supporting Argument

People who benefit from public assistance should contribute to the community in return. Under the bill, eligible (e.g., capable) individuals could be required to participate in community service as an activity set forth in their self-sufficiency plans.

Currently, activities qualifying for the PATH program include paid employment in the public or private sector, on-the-job training, job search and job readiness assistance, educational activities, and unpaid work assignments, including community service. Under the community service program, individuals perform work for the direct benefit of the community under the auspices of public or nonprofit organizations, and the assignments must be designed to improve the employability of participants.

By identifying community service in statute as a PATH program activity, the bill would

highlight the importance of giving back to the community.

Legislative Analyst: Glenn Steffens

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill would have no fiscal impact on the State. Based on Federal regulations and current DHS policy, community service can be included as a component of work participation requirements and a family self-sufficiency plan. Sanctions are in place for families that do not comply with their work participation requirements. As the Act allows the DHS some flexibility in determining which clients are exempt from PATH program participation, the number or portion of additional families that would be required to participate in community service is not known.

The bill would have no fiscal impact on local units of government.

Fiscal Analyst: Frances Carley

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.