

HCS HB 977 -- TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE

SPONSOR: Eggleston

COMMITTEE ACTIONS: Voted "Do Pass with Amendments" by the Standing Committee on Children and Families by a vote of 6 to 3. Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Select Committee on Social Services by a vote of 8 to 2.

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.

A recipient must reimburse the Department of Social Services for the purchase of any item on the list of prohibited items if it is the recipient's first or second violation of the provisions. For any third or subsequent violation, the bill requires a TANF recipient to lose his or her TANF benefits for two years.

The total amount of cash benefits accessed by a TANF or SNAP benefits recipient with his or her EBT card from an ATM, as cash back on a purchase, and through any other means of accessing cash from an EBT card cannot exceed \$40 a month.

The bill defines "pornography" as any obscene material or performance depicting sexual conduct, sexual contact as defined in Section 566.010, RSMo, or a sexual performance or any visual depiction, including any photograph, film, video, picture, or computer or computer-generated image or picture, whether made or produced by electronic, mechanical, or other means, of sexually explicit conduct. The bill defines "tobacco products" as cigarettes, cigarette papers, cigars, smokeless tobacco, smoking tobacco, vapor products, or any other form of tobacco products or products made with tobacco substitute containing nicotine.

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

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that the bill addresses the use of EBT cards in ATMs in Missouri. The bill respects the hard work of Missourians who pay taxes to provide these services and also respects those who need the programs by limiting how the money can be used to only what is actually needed because there is only so much money to go around. Currently, a participant cannot use an EBT card to buy whiskey, but a participant can use an EBT card at an ATM to get cash and then use that cash to buy whiskey, meth,

porn, and other things. According to the Federal General Accounting Office, in 2013 there was \$2.7 billion in SNAP fraud and \$2.4 billion in TANF fraud.

Testifying for the bill was Representative Eggleston.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that people on TANF are very, very poor and wouldn't be on TANF if they weren't very poor. The income limits for TANF haven't changed since 1993. TANF funds are often used toward rent but many landlords do not accept electronic payment of rent, thus tenants must pay in cash or with cashier's check and most people on TANF are unbanked because they do not have enough money to hold a bank account due to account balance minimum requirements. Recipients also must use TANF funds at laundromats. TANF recipients buy clothes at yard and garage sales where you cannot pay with EBT cards. Recipients cannot get cash back for SNAP benefits, only TANF. One day in March it was determined that 100% of the victims in the domestic shelters in Missouri were TANF eligible or living beneath the federal poverty level. One of the largest obstacles to leaving domestic violence and staying away is finances. There are things that must be purchased that are not whiskey, meth, or prostitutes and removing the availability of cash hurts recipients. Think of those who will be swept in and harmed and hurt by preventing the use of EBT cards at ATMs.

Testifying against the bill were Missouri Association for Social Welfare; Colleen S. Coble; and Catholic Charities Archdiocese of St. Louis.