

HB 1565 -- PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

SPONSOR: Engler

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Children and Families by a vote of 11 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Select Committee on Social Services by a vote of 9 to 0.

This bill increases the asset limits for MO HealthNet permanent and totally disabled claimants, MO HealthNet blind claimants, and MO HealthNet aged claimants starting in fiscal year 2018, from no greater than \$1,000 for individuals to \$2,000 and from no greater than \$2,000 for married couples to \$4,000. For each fiscal year after 2018 through 2021, those asset limits will be increased \$1,000 and \$2,000 respectively so that by fiscal year 2021 the limit for individuals will be \$5,000 and for married couples \$10,000. Beginning in fiscal year 2022, these limits must be modified to reflect any cost-of-living adjustments. The bill excludes from asset limit calculations medical savings accounts and independent living accounts as defined in the Ticket to Work Health Assurance Program.

This bill is similar to HCS SCS SB 322 (2015).

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that society has failed to create an accessible pathway for individuals with disabilities. Individuals with disabilities are far more likely to live in poverty than the rest of the general population. Individuals with disabilities have support needs that only Medicaid can provide. No other insurance coverage pays for personal care services. People who need these services are kept poor by current policies when they could otherwise make money if they were able to keep more of their income. The fiscal note for the bill is inflated because most everyone who needs services has spent their assets down to be eligible for Medicaid. The disability determination for Medicaid is rigorous, plus applicants must meet the income limit of 85% of the federal poverty level, and it is unknown how many individuals already have insurance coverage. The average cost per participant chosen in the fiscal note is likely higher than what would actually occur because if the individuals who are not currently enrolled are not receiving services through Medicaid they likely don't need highly sophisticated, high cost services. The majority of people that will be affected by the bill will be those already on Medicaid who want to be able to save more money so they can deal with unexpected expenses like car repairs.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Engler; Andrew Lackey, Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council; Missouri Association of County Developmental Disability Services; Missouri Alliance For

Home Care; Katrice Lee; Missouri Coalition Of Community Mental Health Centers; Empower Missouri; Missouri Catholic Conference; Cathy Brown, Paraquad; Missouri Association of Public Administrators; and Shannon Hawk, National Multiple Sclerosis Society.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say the current Medicaid asset limit is one of the issues that concerns constituents the most. A yearly survey shows this is a huge issue for most individuals with disabilities in the state.

Testifying on the bill was Governor's Council On Disability.