


Government of the District of Columbia
Office of the Chief Financial Officer



Jeffrey S. DeWitt
Chief Financial Officer

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Phil Mendelson
Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia

FROM: Jeffrey S. DeWitt
Chief Financial Officer 

DATE: June 13, 2019

SUBJECT: Fiscal Impact Statement – Access to Public Benefits Amendment Act of 2019

REFERENCE: Bill 23-97, Draft Committee Print sent to the Office of Revenue Analysis on June 11, 2019

Conclusion

Funds are sufficient in the fiscal year 2019 budget and fiscal year 2020 through fiscal year 2023 budget and financial plan to implement the bill.

Background

The bill prevents the District from denying cash or food assistance benefits to persons based solely on their status as a drug felon. The bill applies this benefits eligibility rule to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (“SNAP”),¹ Program on Work Employment and Responsibility (“POWER”)², General Assistance for Children (“GAC”)³, and Interim Disability Assistance (“IDA”)⁴.

¹ SNAP helps income eligible residents and families buy food. For more information on the program, visit: (<https://dhs.dc.gov/service/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-snap>).

² POWER offers specialized services and resources for residents with disabilities. For more information on the program visit (<https://dhs.dc.gov/publication/power-program-work-employment-and-responsibility>).

³ GAC provides cash assistance to households caring for unrelated children whose parents and other relatives are absent from the household and who do not or cannot provide financial support for the care of the child. A description of the program can be found in this publication of the Economic Security Administration within the Department of Human Services: (https://dhs.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dhs/publication/attachments/TANF_Customer_Booklet_Ver_13%20FINAL-V9_0.pdf).

⁴ IDA provides temporary financial assistance to those who are unable to work due to a disability and have a high probability of receiving federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI). IDA payments are issued until SSI eligibility is approved or denied. (<https://dhs.dc.gov/node/117332>).

The Honorable Phil Mendelson

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Federal law⁵ prohibits people convicted of controlled substance felonies from receiving certain federal assistance program benefits, but states and the District may opt out of the requirement. The District had previously opted out⁶ of the prohibition with regards to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families ("TANF") benefits⁷. The bill expands the opt-out and allows people convicted on controlled substance felonies to receive SNAP benefits as well as other District benefits including POWER, GAC, and IDA benefits.

Financial Plan Impact

Funds are sufficient in the fiscal year 2019 budget and fiscal year 2020 through fiscal year 2023 budget and financial plan to implement the bill. It is the District's current practice to administer SNAP benefits and locally-funded benefits regardless of controlled substance felon status. The bill will ensure the District receives federal reimbursement for any SNAP aid provided to persons with controlled substance felony convictions.

⁵ 21 U.S.C. § 862a(a).

⁶ District of Columbia Public Assistance Act of 1982, effective April 6, 1982 (D.C. Law 4-101; D.C. Official Code § 4-2015.71).

⁷ For more information on the TANF program, visit: <https://dhs.dc.gov/service/whats-new-tanf>