
SENATE STAFF ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based only on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Date: March 31, 1998 Revised: _____

Subject: Legal Immigrant's Temporary Bridge Program

	<u>Analyst</u>	<u>Staff Director</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Action</u>
1.	<u>Crosby</u>	<u>Whiddon</u>	<u>CF</u>	<u>Favorable/CS</u>
2.	_____	_____	<u>WM</u>	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____

I. Summary:

The Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 2060 extends the appropriation for the Legal Immigrant's Temporary Income Bridge Program benefits to provide temporary assistance to legal immigrants who have lost their eligibility for benefits while awaiting completion of the citizenship process or an exemption thereto. Eligible are children, persons who received Supplemental Security Income (SSI) at the time their federal benefits ceased, and persons 65 years of age or older. This bill is effective July 1, 1998.

This bill substantially amends section 10 of Chapter 97-259, Laws of Florida.

II. Present Situation:

A Legal Immigrant's Temporary Bridge Program is established by Chapter 97-259, Laws of Florida, for the purpose of providing temporary income assistance to legal immigrants who, due to changes in the federal law, would lose SSI or food stamp benefits. The program is designed to provide temporary income assistance to legal immigrants, 65 years of age or older, who were Florida residents prior to February 1, 1997, and who, after August 1, 1997, due to the federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, became ineligible for federal benefits. Persons served in this program must demonstrate that they are engaged in the process of becoming United States citizens or are seeking an exemption. The department pre-screens applicants by using a mail-issued screening form; self-certification and eligibility for this and other assistance programs are verified by an eligibility specialist. The law states that priority is given to dually eligible persons, disabled persons, and those who may lose housing due to the loss of federal benefits.

The department may collect administrative charges for this program not to exceed 1 percent of the funds provided; total charges for contract providers shall not exceed 3 percent.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

Section 1 amends Chapter 97-259, Laws of Florida, to provide that funds may be used to provide temporary assistance to legal immigrants who have lost their eligibility for benefits while awaiting completion of the citizenship process or a exemption thereto. A two part test is applied. Persons must have lost their eligibility for federal benefits and meet the definition of “child” under the federal Food Stamp Law, have received SSI at the time their federal benefits ceased, or be 65 years of age or older. In determining the per person benefit to be used for children, the department will use the maximum federal food stamp benefit allowable for a family of four. The department will collect administrative charges for this program that are consistent with the federal food stamp program. Only those direct assistance and administrative dollars spent prior to reinstatement are provided in this appropriation.

Section 2 provides that the appropriation will be an amount equal to unexpended funds for fiscal year 1997-1998.

Section 3 provides that this act is effective upon becoming law.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

This bill authorizes an amount equal to the unexpended program funds in fiscal year 1997-1998 from Specific Appropriations 1499A and 1499B of the 1997-1998 General Appropriations Act in the General Revenue Fund to the department.

V. Economic Impact and Fiscal Note:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

Under the provisions of CS/SB 2060, children, persons who were in receipt of SSI when federal benefits ceased, and persons 65 years of age or older who are awaiting completion of the citizenship process or are seeking an exemption thereto are eligible to receive food stamps.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The Bridge Program, established in 1997, was funded through a 1 year appropriation to the department and is presently scheduled to end on June 30, 1998. During the period of July 1, 1997 to January 31, 1998, the Bridge Program paid \$2,820,930 in benefits to Bridge participants.

The department initially reported that this bill would result in a major financial impact on the department due to expansion of the program to children and disabled persons. For example, the department currently serves approximately 18,000 Bridge program participants. The estimated number of newly eligible persons qualifying under this bill is 34,395. The approximated cost under CS/SB 2060, therefore, is right at \$35 million, not including the imcreased administrative fee.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Amendments:

None.