

**REVENUE: No revenue impact**

**FISCAL: Fiscal statement issued**

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<b>Action:</b>	Do Pass as Amended and Be Printed Engrossed and Be Referred to the Committee on Ways and Means by Prior Reference
<b>Vote:</b>	9 - 0 - 0
<b>Yeas:</b>	Boone, Cowan, Dembrow, Freeman, Huffman, Maurer, Olson, VanOrman, Tomei
<b>Nays:</b>	0
<b>Exc.:</b>	0
<b>Prepared By:</b>	Keely West, Administrator
<b>Meeting Dates:</b>	2/11, 4/24

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**WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:** Creates a General Assistance Program in the Department of Human Services (DHS) to provide monthly cash assistance, medical assistance, and case managements services to residents of Oregon pursuing Social Security Income or Social Security Disability Benefits. Establishes criteria of eligibility and directs DHS to adopt rules to administer the program. Allows the General Assistance Program to recover funds paid to program recipients for time periods covered by retroactive payments made by the United States Government through Supplemental Security Income or the Social Security Administration. Redefines terms related to program requirements; limits program expenditures to amounts appropriated to DHS for the program. Allows the department to provide assistance through the fund subject to allotment. Declares an emergency.

**ISSUES DISCUSSED:**

- Eligibility requirements
- Program cost
- Time required to qualify for Social Security benefits
- Program as a bridge

**EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT:** Redefines terms related to program requirements; limits program expenditures to amounts appropriated to Department of Human Service for the program; allows the department to provide assistance through the fund subject to allotment.

**BACKGROUND:** General assistance programs serve individuals with disabling conditions not receiving federal disability benefits and not otherwise eligible for workers compensation or unemployment insurance. Typically, recipients are low income individuals or childless couples with few assets. States may claim reimbursement of the cash assistance paid to clients when recipients qualify for federal disability benefits.

Oregon's general assistance program, discontinued in January 2003, primarily served individuals who met impairment and financial eligibility criteria and agreed to apply for federal disability benefits. The statewide caseload was about 2,500 people. The program had three basic features: 1) cash assistance, 2) Oregon Health Plan Plus eligibility and 3) case management assistance to help the clients qualify for SSI and/or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). For an additional two years a state general assistance program existed for those people assessed as likely to qualify for SSI, but not those eligible for SSDI.

In 2007, HB 2469 created a limited program that assists Temporary Assistance for Needy Family recipients (families with children) in qualifying for disability benefits. According to DHS, 943 households have qualified for the program. A total of 122 cases have been approved by Social Security since November of 2007; as of August 1, 2008 the state has received federal reimbursement of \$111,725.61 for benefits paid to these households.

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***This summary has not been adopted or officially endorsed by action of the committee.***