

Agency Report
Department of Human Services
General Assistance Study

Analyst: Laurie Byerly

Request: Acknowledge receipt of a report on a general assistance study.

Recommendation: Acknowledge receipt of the report.

Analysis: HB 5201 (2014) included a General Fund allocation of \$112,000 General Fund for the Department of Human Services (DHS), with stakeholder participation, to conduct a one-time study on and make recommendations for a program designed to provide temporary cash assistance to low-income, childless adults with disabilities (at a minimum). The budget report directed DHS to report the study results and program recommendations to the Joint Committee on Ways and Means during the 2015 Legislative Session.

The study, completed through a contract with Portland State University, provides background information on childless adults with disabilities and on various programs that assist these individuals, including programs that help special populations, such as military veterans. Thirty states currently operate temporary cash assistance or “General Assistance” programs that pay a cash benefit to people waiting to qualify for federal disability benefits. Oregon’s program was eliminated in 2005 due to funding constraints. Study results indicate there are likely around 3,200 individuals in Oregon who could benefit from a renewed program.

The study notes the following regarding components for a general assistance pilot program:

- Participants should number at least 200 to gather adequate data.
- Cash grant amount should be flexible enough to cover housing needs.
- Pilot should consider options to address needs of special populations (homeless, ages 55 to 64, jail or prison history, veterans).
- Partnerships with local service providers, including nonprofit organizations and Coordinated Care Organizations, should be leveraged.
- Program metrics and evaluation should be built into any pilot program.

Both the study and HB 2194-A (2015), which establishes a general assistance pilot project, estimate the cost of a pilot project serving 200 clients over two years to be close to \$3 million. About 70% of the state costs would ultimately be reimbursed by federal disability payments. The house bill has been referred to the Joint Committee on Ways and Means.

The Legislative Fiscal Office recommends acknowledging receipt of the report on a general assistance study.