

SB 241 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Human Services

Prepared By: Iva Sokolovska, LPRO Analyst

Meeting Dates: 3/8, 3/27

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Requires state agencies or local governments to inform and request a resident to apply for assistance or benefits available from funded federal programs before providing similar assistance or benefits through a program that uses resources from the state. Specifies informing requirements.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Unclaimed benefits in Oregon from federal programs
- Administrative burdens on agency staff
- Access to more information and application guidance for access to benefits

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

The federal government offers a variety of assistance programs for individuals, families, and businesses, often in partnership with the states. These programs can help provide income, food, housing, healthcare, and other necessities to those in need.

Income assistance. Financial Assistance programs for individuals and families provide benefits in the form of payments, goods, or services to help with basic living expenses to eligible individuals. Qualified recipients may receive help with food, housing, home energy, childcare, and job training through the [Temporary Assistance for Needy Families \(TANF\)](#). This is federally funded, state-run benefits program designed to help families achieve independence following temporary difficulty. The older, blind, and/or disabled Americans who have little or no income could be eligible for the [Supplemental Security Income \(SSI\)](#), which is a federal income program administered but not funded by Social Security. SSI consists of a monthly payment to help with the cost of food, clothing, and shelter. [Social Security Disability Insurance benefits](#) are available to people who cannot work for at least one year due to a medical condition or who are expected to die from that condition. [Unemployment Insurance \(UI\)](#) is a federal and state program. The states administer the program, which the federal government largely funds.

Food Assistance. The [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\)](#) helps needy families supplement their food budget. Eligibility is determined by individual states that administer the program. [Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children \(WIC\)](#) provides low-income women and their young children with healthy food, nutrition counseling, and referral to health, welfare, and social services agencies. WIC is a federal grant program administered by the government through 89 WIC agencies and approximately 47,000 authorized retailers. Food programs for school-age children include [the National School Lunch Program \(NSLP\)](#), the [School Breakfast Program \(SBP\)](#), and the [Summer Food Service Program \(SFSP\)](#). Eligibility requirements for all three programs are the same: if a family's income falls below 130% of the federal poverty guidelines, the children are entitled to free food. The [Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program \(SFMNP\)](#) offers coupons to purchase fresh fruits, vegetables, honey, and herbs at farmers' markets, roadside stands, and farms to low-income seniors. The [Commodity Supplemental Food Program \(CSFP\)](#) serves low-income persons at least 60 years of age by supplementing their diets with [USDA Foods](#) every month. Recipients must be 60 years of age or older and live in

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an area that offers either program to apply.

Healthcare. Federal government healthcare programs provide medical coverage for low-income and older Americans, children, veterans, and those who have recently lost their jobs. [Medicare](#) is a federal health insurance program primarily for those 65 and older. [Medicaid](#) is for low-income families and individuals. [Children's Health Insurance Program \(CHIP\)](#) is a joint federal and state program that provides health coverage to uninsured children in families with incomes too high to qualify for Medicaid, but too low to afford private coverage. Military veterans or former members of the National Guard or Reserve who served on active duty and was not dishonorably discharged can receive [VA healthcare benefits](#). Health coverage under the [Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act](#) (COBRA) is mandated by federal law for employees and their dependents when they lose their job or experience a reduction in work hours.

Education. The [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#) is the federal government's access point for all forms of student financial aid for college students with demonstrated financial needs.

Housing. There are three forms of subsidized rental housing: privately owned subsidized housing, the [housing choice voucher \(HCV\) program](#), and U.S. [Department of Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\) public housing](#).

Retirement. The [Social Security \(Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance\) Program](#) is the primary government retirement program for most citizens 65 and over who qualify through their work history.

Senate Bill 241 requires state agencies or local governments to inform and request a resident to apply for assistance or benefits available from funded federal programs before providing similar benefits through a program that uses resources from the state.