

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 2003

As Passed House:

March 7, 2007

Title: An act relating to a pilot program for the business enterprises program.

Brief Description: Implementing a pilot program for the business enterprises program.

Sponsors: By House Committee on State Government & Tribal Affairs (originally sponsored by Representatives Alexander, Hunt, Morrell and Ormsby).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government & Tribal Affairs: 2/21/07, 2/23/07 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/7/07, 97-0.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Establishes a pilot program for the Business Enterprises Program.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & TRIBAL AFFAIRS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Hunt, Chair; Appleton, Vice Chair; Chandler, Ranking Minority Member; Armstrong, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Green, Kretz, McDermott, Miloscia and Ormsby.

Staff: Alison Hellberg (786-7152).

Background:

The Department of Services for the Blind (DSB) provides a variety of programs to blind and visually impaired persons. One of the programs offered by the DSB is the Business Enterprises Program (BEP). The BEP trains and licenses legally blind people to manage snack/gift shops, espresso stands, and food service facilities in public buildings. The goal of the BEP is to increase employment opportunities for blind persons and to encourage them to become successful and independent business persons. The BEP ensures that applicants

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receive training to operate and manage a restaurant, provides the essential pieces of food service equipment, and provides ongoing management assistance to blind vendors. The BEP is self-supporting and is not funded by state or federal dollars.

The DSB has the first and primary right to operate vending facilities on state, federal, county, municipal and other government property. The DSB may waive this right if it is unable to operate a vending facility in a given location.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The DSB shall implement a pilot program within existing resources. The pilot program requires a legally blind person, in cooperation with the DSB, to subcontract with a full-service commercial food service establishment, skill center or community college culinary program in the Pritchard Building.

The DSB selects the commercial food services establishment from a list of bids submitted by interested establishments and enters into a three-year contract with the successful bidder. The DSB must submit an electronic report on the pilot program to the appropriate legislative committees 18 months after the beginning of the pilot program. The DSB will not be charged rent for this pilot program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill is meant to work in cooperation with blind vendors and not in competition. A licensee under the Business Enterprises Program will still be the primary manager, but will work in cooperation with a food service establishment. The goal is to give more options to licensees.

When the Legislature is not in session, the customer base for the Pritchard Building is quite different. This bill is an effort to draw in customers from other places. State employees gave very low ratings to the food on campus in the last survey. This is meant to enhance the quality of the food on campus. It is in the form of a pilot program to see how it goes and what adjustments might need to be made.

(Opposed) It will be extremely difficult to get a program like this off the ground in three to six months. The economics are difficult to make this program successful. There will need to be a dramatic increase in the number of customers.

The goal of the program is to make independent blind business persons. This program may go against that goal and may erode the Business Enterprises Program. Just because there is a problem with one vendor does not make it necessary to destroy the entire program.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Alexander, prime sponsor; Representative Hunt.

(Opposed) Roy Gappert and Robert Miller, Blind Food Service Operator.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.