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ENGROSSED SECOND SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 2075

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State of Washington

67th Legislature

2022 Regular Session

**By** House Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Peterson, Fitzgibbon, Simmons, Morgan, Chopp, Walen, Macri, and Sutherland)

READ FIRST TIME 02/07/22.

1 AN ACT Relating to establishing service requirements for the  
2 department of social and health services; adding a new section to  
3 chapter 74.04 RCW; and creating new sections.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds that  
6 establishing minimum service requirements for the department of  
7 social and health services economic services administration's  
8 community services division is necessary due to the increase in call  
9 center wait times due to the closure of community services offices  
10 during the COVID-19 public health emergency, resulting in individuals  
11 being unable to access safety net programs administered by the  
12 department.

13 (2) The legislature intends to establish minimum service  
14 expectations and requirements to ensure that eligible individuals  
15 receive needed services through the department's community services  
16 offices. The legislature further intends to prohibit the department's  
17 community services division from imposing punitive measures against  
18 individuals when they have attempted to contact or access the  
19 community services office, per requirements to apply for and maintain  
20 their benefits, and are unable to connect due to long wait times over

1 the phone or due to closure of the community services offices, to the  
2 extent allowable under federal and state law.

3 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 74.04  
4 RCW to read as follows:

5 (1) Minimum service expectations and requirements for the  
6 department's community services division are established.

7 (a) The community services division must ensure that clients may  
8 apply for and receive services in a reasonable and accessible manner  
9 that is suited to the clients' needs. This includes, but is not  
10 limited to, meeting client needs related to technology, language, and  
11 ability.

12 (b) Community services offices must be open for walk-in and in-  
13 person services during normal business hours.

14 (i) The community services division may not limit which clients  
15 are able to use walk-in and in-person services or limit which  
16 services may be accessed in community services offices.

17 (ii) The department retains the right to close an office for  
18 emergency, health, safety, and welfare issues.

19 (c) The community services division must maintain telephonic  
20 access to services.

21 (i) The community services division must strive to ensure that  
22 clients do not experience total call wait times that exceed 30  
23 minutes.

24 (ii) The community services division must monitor the average  
25 wait time for client telephone calls per week, and include a  
26 measurement of all incoming calls, including dropped calls.

27 (iii) Beginning November 1, 2022, and annually thereafter, the  
28 department must report to the appropriate committees of the  
29 legislature and the governor in compliance with RCW 43.01.036 on the  
30 average wait time for client telephone calls per week, the  
31 measurement of all incoming calls, and the number of dropped calls,  
32 and the methodology the department uses to monitor the total wait  
33 times, the incoming calls, and the dropped calls.

34 (iv) By November 1, 2022, the department must provide to the  
35 legislature recommendations on achieving the goal of 30-minute call  
36 wait times, including recommendations on staffing, technology, and  
37 any other infrastructure needed to efficiently serve clients.

38 (2) Where a cash and food assistance applicant or recipient is  
39 negatively affected by excessive call wait times, dropped calls, or

1 community services division office closures during normal business  
2 hours:

3 (a) The department must prioritize the processing of the  
4 applicant's application to the extent allowed under state and federal  
5 law; and

6 (b) The department may not take negative action to the extent  
7 allowed under state and federal law.

8 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** If specific funding for the purposes of  
9 this act, referencing this act by bill or chapter number, is not  
10 provided by June 30, 2022, in the omnibus appropriations act, this  
11 act is null and void.

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