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H.B. 216
136th General Assembly

Bill Analysis

Version: As Introduced

Primary Sponsors: Reps. Williams and Jarrells

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SUMMARY

- Requires the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) to establish a three-year pilot program known as the Actionable Help and New Dignity for Upward Progression (A HAND UP) pilot program to assist individuals transitioning to the workforce as they become ineligible for public assistance benefits.

DETAILED ANALYSIS

‘A HAND UP’ pilot program

The bill requires ODJFS to establish a three-year pilot program known as the Actionable Help and New Dignity for Upward Progression (A HAND UP) pilot program to assist program participants in transitioning into the workforce as they become ineligible for public assistance benefits. In establishing the pilot program, ODJFS must select four counties in which to operate the pilot program: one metropolitan county; one midsize county; and two rural counties, one of which is in Ohio’s Appalachian region.¹

ODJFS must have the pilot program fully operational within 180 days after the bill’s effective date. In setting up the pilot program, ODJFS must do all of the following:²

- Establish eligibility criteria for individuals participating in the pilot program;
- Establish conditions for continued participation in the pilot program;
- Establish a competitive application process for employers seeking participation in the pilot program;

¹ Section 1(A).

² Section 1(B).

- Identify existing subsidized employment programs and provide training to program operators seeking to participate in the pilot program;
- Establish an assessment tool to determine the success of employers participating in the pilot program;
- Establish processes by which pilot program participants are connected with employers participating in the program;
- Establish a mentorship program that connects pilot program participants with program mentors; and
- Identify and establish a financial literacy program for pilot program participants.

The pilot program must (1) provide participants with a stipend, provided on a sliding scale, to pay health care insurance premiums and deductibles or child care expenses, and (2) provide participating employers with subsidies for employing pilot program participants.³ Additionally, if a county selected to participate in the pilot program has established an individual development account program under existing law, ODJFS must seek a waiver from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to allow pilot program participants to use individual development account funds for purposes other than those specified in federal regulations.⁴

Rulemaking and digital platform

To assist in the implementation of the pilot program, the bill requires ODJFS, within 180 days after the bill's effective date, to adopt rules as necessary to implement the pilot program.⁵ To further assist in the implementation and operation of the pilot program, the bill requires ODJFS to establish, in collaboration with the Office of InnovateOhio, a digital application that does the following:⁶

- Calculates a pilot program participant's income based on the individual's benefits received and income earned;
- Connects program participants with pilot program resources;
- Provides educational and motivational resources to pilot program participants; and
- Connects participants with mentors or pilot program case workers.

Study and report

ODJFS must study program participants once they have completed participation. The study must examine:

³ Section 1(C).

⁴ Section 1(F); see 42 Code of Federal Regulations 263.22.

⁵ Section 1(D).

⁶ Section 1(E).

1. Whether a former participant is employed;
2. The type of employment in which the former participant is engaged;
3. The amount of compensation the former participant is receiving;
4. Whether the former participant's employer provides health insurance;
5. Whether and how often the former participant has received public assistance benefits since completing participation in the pilot program; and
6. Whether the former participant is self-sufficient.⁷

Beginning one year after the bill's effective date, ODJFS must submit a report to the General Assembly specifying the outcomes of the pilot program, including data indicating the ways in which the pilot program is assisting participants in transitioning from public assistance benefits to the workforce. The report also must include the results of the required study of former program participants described above. After submitting the initial report, ODJFS must submit subsequent reports at the end of each year in which the pilot program operates.⁸

Appropriation

To assist with the administration of the 'A HAND UP' Pilot Program, the bill appropriates \$10 million in each of FYs 2026 and 2027 to ODJFS to be used to support the pilot program.

HISTORY

Action	Date
Introduced	04-01-25

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⁷ Section 1(G).

⁸ Section 1(H).