



New Hampshire Senate News Release

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Senate Continues EBT Reform Efforts

SB203 prohibits the purchase of nonessential items & improves legislative oversight

Concord, NH – Legislation passed by the State Senate earlier today will prohibit New Hampshire residents receiving public assistance from using those funds to purchase tobacco, alcohol, lottery tickets and other nonessential items. The bill, sponsored by Senate Finance Chairman Jeanie Forrester, R-Meredith, follows similar Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) reform legislation included in the most recent state budget which prohibits establishments that predominantly sell these and other prohibited items from accepting EBT cards as payment or allowing the use of EBT cards at ATMs located within those facilities.

“The recent audit of the state's EBT program as well as anecdotal reports of improper benefit use have made it clear that additional statutory oversight is necessary to ensure our low-income assistance program funds are being used responsibly,” said Sen. Forrester. “Ongoing efforts by the Senate Finance Committee to reform the EBT program and prevent abuse will protect taxpayers and ensure the program is only providing access to those goods and services that beneficiaries truly need.”

A 2013 audit conducted by the Legislative Budget Assistant Office suggests that clearer statutory guidance and improved regulatory oversight could save taxpayers millions of dollars each year by reducing the use of cash assistance benefits on nonessential items.

“Further, by requiring the Department of Health and Human Services to report on the implementation of these recently enacted reforms as well as other efforts to improve the regulation of the state's cash assistance program, this bill will ensure that the public and the legislature are kept well informed on the Department's activities in order to effectively monitor and manage this program,” Forrester concluded.

Senate Bill 203 passed the Senate 20-3 and now moves to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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