

Executive Summary: Health Impact Review of House Committee Striker 1986.1

5232-S.E. AMH ELHS H1986.1, Supporting economic security by updating provisions related to the home security fund and the essential needs and housing support program (2025 Legislative Session)

Evidence indicates that 5232-S.E. AMH ELHS H1986.1 (House Committee Striker 1986.1) may result in some local service providers distributing Essential Needs and Housing Support (HEN) program funds for expanded eligible uses, which may increase financial and housing stability, improve health outcomes, and decrease inequities for some people who receive HEN services.

BILL INFORMATION

Sponsors: House Early Learning & Human Services Committee (originally sponsored by Senators C. Wilson, Frame, Harris, Hasegawa, Nobles, and Saldaña; by request of Department of Commerce)

Summary of Bill:

- Expands eligible uses of HEN funds, by:
 - Allowing Washington State Department of Commerce (Commerce) to distribute HEN funds to adults with low- or extremely low-incomes who are elderly or disabled and transitioning off HEN benefits, receiving federal social security benefits, and experiencing an immediate housing need, without referral from the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS).
 - Requiring local service providers to verify HEN referrals from DSHS for rental assistance every 12 months.
 - Permitting direct cash assistance as an allowable expense only when it addresses a need identified in a person's housing stability plan.
 - Specifies that direct cash assistance may be provided through debit cash cards or other forms of flexible funding assistance, including vouchers for transportation, gift cards, direct payments to vendors, and other similar methods of assistance.
 - Expanding HEN eligibility for victims of human trafficking as defined in [RCW 74.04.005](#).
 - Removing the eligibility requirement that a person must be a U.S. citizen, an alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence, or otherwise residing in the U.S. under color of the law^a.

^a Key informants stated that “Permanently Residing Under Color of Law” (PRUCOL) is outdated terminology used within the context of public benefits eligibility, and it is not a formal immigration status (personal communications, DSHS, March 2025). It refers to non-citizens who are legally residing in the U.S. with the knowledge of the U.S.

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- Directs Commerce to align the administration rate for HEN with other home security funded programs.

HEALTH IMPACT REVIEW

Summary of Findings:

This Health Impact Review found the following evidence for House Committee Striker 1986.1:

- **Informed assumption** that expanding eligible uses of HEN funds by: 1) Allowing Commerce to distribute HEN funds, without referral from DSHS, to certain people transitioning off HEN; 2) Requiring local service providers to verify HEN eligibility every 12 months; 3) Permitting local service providers to provide direct cash assistance, in certain circumstances; and 4) Expanding HEN eligibility for victims of human trafficking would likely result in DSHS conducting rulemaking and Commerce issuing guidance to local service providers about expanded eligible uses of HEN funds. This assumption is based on information from key informants from Commerce and DSHS.
- **Informed assumption** that DSHS conducting rulemaking and Commerce issuing guidance to local service providers about expanded eligible uses of HEN funds may result in some local service providers distributing HEN funds for expanded eligible uses. This assumption is based on information from key informants.
- **Informed assumption** that local service providers distributing HEN funds for expanded eligible uses may increase financial and housing stability for some people who receive HEN services. This assumption is based on HEN program evaluations and information from key informants.
- **Very strong evidence** that improved financial and housing stability would likely improve health outcomes for some people who receive HEN services.
- **Very strong evidence** that improving health outcomes would likely decrease inequities for some people who receive HEN services.

Additional Considerations includes discussion of potential impacts due to immigration status.

FULL REVIEW

For review methods, logic model, strength-of-evidence analyses, and citations of empirical evidence refer to the full Health Impact Review at

<https://sboh.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2025-04/HIR-2025-07-HouseCommitteeStriker1986.1.pdf>

Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and whose departure is not being actively pursued (personal communication, DSHS, April 2025).

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