



*Written Testimony before the Housing Committee
Department of Social Services
March 10, 2022*

S.B. 299 - AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE CONCERNING THE USE OF THE STATE-ADMINISTERED GENERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM TO ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS.

This bill creates a task force to study how the state-administered general assistance program (SAGA) and other state assistance can be used to address homelessness in the state. The Department of Social Services appreciates the intent of this legislation and efforts to reduce homelessness.

DSS offers the following general information regarding SAGA for consideration of the committee:

SAGA is an entirely state-funded program administered by the Department that provides assistance to very low-income and low-asset individuals who are unable to work or who qualify as “unemployable.”

Currently, SAGA provides assistance to those who meet the eligibility criteria of the SAGA program as follows:

- An unemployable person upon determination of such person's unemployability, in the amount of \$222 in cash assistance per month, or
- A person with a short-term inability to work who is required to pay for shelter in the amount of \$222 in cash assistance per month, or
A person with a short-term inability to work who is not required to pay for shelter in the amount of \$56 in cash assistance per month.

SAGA will also pay the standard of assistance for individuals residing in rated boarding facilities who have been determined disabled by the Colonial Cooperative Care medical review team.

The Department considers homelessness a significant challenge for many of our clients and welcomes the opportunity to work on this task force.