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Int. No. 910

By Council Members Hudson, Brewer, Cabán, Restler, Yeger, Abreu, Richardson Jordan, Avilés, Ung and Riley

A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to establishing a universal benefits application for city benefits and codifying Access NYC, and to repeal section 3-119.3 of the administrative code of the city of New York, relating to a study on notification of public assistance eligibility

Be it enacted by the Council as follows:

Section 1. Section 3-119.3 of the administrative code of the city of New York is REPEALED.

§ 2. a. Definitions. For the purposes of this section, the following terms have the following meanings:

City benefits. The term "city benefits" means all forms of public assistance, as defined in section 21-151 of the administrative code of the city of New York, provided by the city of New York for which a natural person may apply through an application designed and administered by a city agency.

Commissioner. The term "commissioner" means the commissioner of the department of social services.

b. By December 31, 2023, the commissioner, in collaboration with relevant agencies, shall complete and publish on the department of social service's website a report regarding the utility and feasibility of creating a universal city benefits application. Such report shall include, but need not be limited to:

1. The utility and feasibility of synchronizing city benefit eligibility criteria, including any documents required as proof of eligibility for a city benefits program;

2. Identifying and assessing any means to shorten the length of a universal city benefits application;

3. Identifying and assessing any risks and means to diminish risks to applicants created by a universal city benefits application such as benefits cliffs, impact on eligibility for other benefits, and the potential for submission of erroneous information;

4. Identifying and assessing any issues relating to data collection and storage across city agencies; and

5. Recommendations for any legislation or policy changes necessary to implement or improve a universal city benefits application.

c. Within 90 days of submission of the report required by subdivision b of this local law, the commissioner shall make a determination as to whether further legislation is necessary to create a universal city benefits application.

d. Within 180 days of the commissioner's determination required by subdivision c of this local law:

1. If the commissioner determines that no further legislation is necessary, then the commissioner in collaboration with relevant agencies shall develop a universal city benefits application;

2. If the commissioner determines that further legislation is necessary, then the commissioner in collaboration with relevant agencies shall develop a universal city benefits application including as many city benefits applications as feasible without further legislation.

§ 3. Title 21 of the administrative code of the city of New York is amended by adding a new section 21-151 to read as follows:

§ 21-151 Streamlining access to public assistance. a. Definitions. For the purposes of this section, the following terms have the following meanings:

City benefits. The term "city benefits" means all forms of public assistance provided by the city of New York for which a natural person may apply through an application designed and administered by a city agency.

Public assistance. The term "public assistance" means all forms of government benefits, including but not limited to financial assistance, housing assistance, safety net assistance and family assistance, provided by the federal government, the state of New York or the city of New York for which a natural person residing in the city of New York may apply.

b. Universal city benefits application. The commissioner in consultation with relevant agencies shall establish and maintain a universal city benefits application in accordance with this local law. The commissioner

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shall incorporate any newly created city benefit into the universal city benefits application within 90 days after the effective date of such city benefit. If the commissioner determines that a newly created city benefit cannot be legally incorporated into the universal city benefits application the commissioner shall submit a report to the speaker of the council explaining that determination.

c. Access NYC. The commissioner in consultation with relevant agencies shall establish and maintain a website known as Access NYC or any successor name that permits the public to assess their potential eligibility for every public assistance program and provides a means to access an application or otherwise receive the public aid for which they may be eligible. The universal city benefits application required by subdivision b of this section may be incorporated into the Access NYC website.

1. The commissioner shall incorporate additional public assistance programs into the Access NYC website as practicable. Beginning January 1, 2023, and annually thereafter, the commissioner shall publish a report on the department's website explaining why any public assistance program has not been incorporated into the Access NYC website.

d. The commissioner in collaboration with relevant agencies and non-profit providers, shall undertake efforts to increase public awareness of the universal city benefits application and the Access NYC website. Such efforts shall include but not be limited to providing a quick response code in physical application materials, and including a link to the universal benefits application and the Access NYC website on any city website relating to public assistance programs.

e. Nothing in the local law that added this section shall prohibit an applicant from applying individually to any city benefit included in a universal city benefits application or any public assistance program included on the Access NYC website.

§ 4. This local law takes effect immediately.

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