
OLR Bill Analysis

HB 7121

AN ACT EXCLUDING VETERANS' FEDERAL SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABILITY BENEFITS FOR PURPOSES OF ELIGIBILITY FOR ASSISTANCE FROM A PUBLIC DEFENDER.

SUMMARY

This bill requires excluding a person's service-connected disability benefits administered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs from consideration under the guidelines public defenders use to determine indigency and eligibility for public defender services.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2025

BACKGROUND

Definition of an Indigent Defendant

By law, an "indigent defendant" is an adult charged with a crime; a child who has a right to counsel in a juvenile matter; or a parent, guardian, or other person in certain cases, who does not have the financial ability to secure competent legal representation and pay necessary expenses of legal representation.

Calculation of Income to Determine Eligibility for a Public Defender

By law, the commission is required to make annual guidelines. A person's income, which must be calculated according to the guidelines and that is 250% or less of the federal poverty level, may qualify as an indigent defendant.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Veterans' and Military Affairs Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 20 Nay 0 (03/11/2025)