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LB 637, 972

follow-up to the bill, LB 637, that was passed last year. It is necessary to establish the responsibilities of the State Disbursement Unit and to insure that the transition from the current system goes smoothly. Other provisions of LB 637 have been completed. A study of the customer service issues around an SDU was completed by the NU Public Policy Center with recommendations, and HHS has recommended to this body that the State Treasurer be designated to manage the SDU and we have approved that. We have already had the opportunity to anticipate some of this discussion when we received a letter from the Health and Human Services Policy Secretary, Chris Peterson, informing us that the computer system for child support, CHARTS, would not meet the September 1, 2000, federal deadline and that we would have further sanctions because of that. I am happy to tell you, as most of you already know, that the Lieutenant Governor, in his role as the federal liaison, was successful at negotiating an agreement with the federal government to grant conditional certification to our child support computer system. And even though that does not in any way remove that issue from being in front of us, I hope that it does a little bit for today. Health and Human Services is aggressively pursuing what will happen with the CHARTS system; IBM has been in to look at it, and we are in a situation where I think that we're ready to move forward in that regard. But we are not facing the potential of the federal government withholding a part of their...of the pie that they give us to help us collect child support. LB 972 outlines the responsibilities of the Single Disbursement Unit, receipting and identifying payments, disbursing payments. After the SDU is operational, the IV-D division will maintain payment records for all cases where payment is made through the SDU; the division's records will serve as prima facie evidence. There will be a statewide toll-free telephone system to answer questions. As amended by the Judiciary Committee, LB 972 would also require a report to the Governor and the Legislature every year with specific information regarding the operation of the SDU. It would create the Customer Service Unit, create a commission to recommend performance indicators for the SDU and the Customer Service Unit. It specifies that the fees charged for insufficient support checks can only be the cost of processing the insufficient check, and that individuals can only be required to pay in guaranteed funds following two insufficient