

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5854

**AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES,
MARCH 6, 1991**

Brief Description: Creating the children in poverty assessment and assistance act.

SPONSORS: Senators Conner, Craswell, Stratton and McMullen.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5854 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators L. Smith, Vice Chairman; Craswell, and Stratton.

Staff: Lidia Mori (786-7755)

Hearing Dates: March 5, 1991; March 6, 1991

BACKGROUND:

Community action agencies were created by federal statute in 1964. They address the issues of poverty at a local level and provide direct assistance and referral information to poor people throughout the state of Washington. The federal funding for community action agencies is disappearing while the need for the services they perform is increasing. The increasing need is due to numerous factors such as rural and urban unemployment and the economic crisis involving the timber industry.

SUMMARY:

The Department of Community Development is directed to distribute community service block grants to community assistance agencies. The block grants will be distributed in accordance to established formula and administered under the name of "community child poverty project". The community service agencies will identify eligible, at-risk families and provide emergency services and referrals to aid the families in attaining long-term stability and self-sufficiency. There will be a special emphasis on enhanced funding for food banks, energy assistance and job-related assistance, training, and child care. Individual family resource specialists will be assigned to at least 5,000 eligible, at-risk families who are not currently being served by case managers. The community action agencies may subcontract with other local agencies to provide these services. A comprehensive community-oriented child and family resource guide to aid in the identification and referral of needed services for poor children and families will be developed and distributed.

A Child Poverty Project Coordinating Council is created to develop and implement the child poverty project. The council will be composed of representatives from community action agencies from across Washington.

A full assessment of the child poverty project will be commissioned by the Child Poverty Project Coordinating Council and will be submitted to the Legislature by January 31, 1993.

EFFECT OF PROPOSED SUBSTITUTE:

All provisions of the bill were deleted except a full assessment of the child poverty project shall be commissioned by the Child Poverty Project Coordinating Council and submitted to the Legislature by January 31, 1993.

Appropriation: \$800,000

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: requested

TESTIMONY FOR:

Community action agencies are managed at a local level and provide direct, hands-on services to poor people in Washington. They provide a wide variety of critical services. Community action agencies are at a critical stage due to cut-backs in federal funding. The funding asked for in the bill is the bare minimum.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: Senator Paul Conner (pro); Kathy Jones, President, Community Action Agencies, Longview (pro); Peter Simpson, Executive Director, Community Action Agencies, Clallam/Jefferson Counties (pro); John Walsh, Community Action Agencies, Thurston County (pro); Chuck Sauvage, WA State Assn. of Community Action Agencies (pro); Margaret Martinez, Children's Budget Coalition