

**SENATE BILL REPORT**

**ESB 5959**

**AS PASSED SENATE, JUNE 28, 1991**

**Brief Description:** Restricting eligibility for general assistance unemployable.

**SPONSORS:** Senators McDonald, Hayner and West.

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS**

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators McDonald, Chairman; Craswell, Vice Chairman; Bailey, Bluechel, Cantu, Hayner, Johnson, Matson, Metcalf, Newhouse, Saling, and West.

**Staff:** Karen Hayes (786-7715)

**Hearing Dates:** April 15, 1991

**BACKGROUND:**

The general assistance-unemployable (GA-U) program is a state only cash assistance program for individuals who are disabled due to a physical or mental incapacity. The program serves only single or married adults without children, and the current payment standard for one person is \$320 per month. Recipients also are provided medical benefits under the state only GA-U medical assistance program. There is no limit as to the amount of time an individual may receive benefits.

Eligibility for GA-U is determined by using a decision-making process known as the progressive evaluation process (PEP). If a medical condition alone is insufficient to determine eligibility, then vocational factors are considered. Applicants must further demonstrate that their incapacity will persist for more than 60 days, and must participate in any available treatment to improve their disability. Those recipients who are anticipated to be incapacitated for at least one year are also required by administrative rule to apply for the federal supplemental security income (SSI) program.

**SUMMARY:**

GA-U applicants must demonstrate that their incapacity will last for more than 90 days.

**Appropriation:** none

**Revenue:** none

**Fiscal Note:** requested

**Effective Date:** July 1, 1991

**TESTIMONY FOR:** None

**TESTIMONY AGAINST:**

General Assistance-Unemployable (GA-U) recipients have few alternative means of financial support. If the bill is adopted, those disqualified from GA-U would be seen in greater numbers among the homeless on the street and would enter emergency rooms and psychiatric units at public expense. Vocational factors should be retained as an eligibility criteria for GA-U. Displaced homemakers and developmentally disabled adults are not likely to qualify for federal secured supplemental income (SSI) benefits and require time on general assistance to permit skill training.

**TESTIFIED:** CON: Steve Lansing, Lutheran Public Policy; Ned Dolejsi, Washington State Catholic Conference; Tony Lee, Washington Association of Churches; Lonnie Johns-Brown, National Association of Social Workers and National Association of Women; Pat Thibaudeau, Washington Community Mental Health Council; Jeff Larsen, Washington Assembly for Citizens with Disabilities; Mary Jo Wilcox, Washington Assembly for Citizens with Disabilities; Ann Simons, Washington Association of Community Action Agencies and Washington Women United; Bernice Moorehead, DSHS; Phil Kaplan, Washington Poverty Law Advocates