

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESHB 1197

As Amended by the Senate

Title: An act relating to public assistance.

Brief Description: Allowing families to retain a greater percentage of income before public benefits are reduced or terminated.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Human Services (originally sponsored by Representatives Leonard, Cooke, Riley, Flemming, Valle, Brown, G. Cole, Mielke, Veloria, Wineberry, Dorn, Anderson, J. Kohl, Karahalios, H. Myers, Vance, Ogden, King, Jones, Eide, Johanson, R. Meyers, Cothorn, Roland, Holm, Wolfe, Franklin, Thibaudeau, Springer, Basich, Kremen, Foreman, Kessler, Campbell, Dunshee, Lemmon, Linville and Pruitt).

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Human Services, February 24, 1993, DPS;
Appropriations, March 6, 1993, DPS(HS-A APP);
Passed House, March 17, 1993, 98-0;
Amended by Senate.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Leonard, Chair; Riley, Vice Chair; Cooke, Ranking Minority Member; Talcott, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Brown; Karahalios; Lisk; Patterson; Thibaudeau; and Wolfe.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Padden.

Staff: David Knutson (786-7146).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill by Committee on Human Services be substituted therefor and the substitute bill as amended by Committee on Appropriations do pass. Signed by 25 members: Representatives Locke, Chair; Valle, Vice Chair; Silver, Ranking Minority Member; Carlson, Assistant

Ranking Minority Member; Appelwick; Ballasiotes; Basich; Cooke; Dellwo; Dorn; Dunshee; G. Fisher; Jacobsen; Lemmon; Linville; Peery; Rust; Sehlin; Sheahan; Sommers; Stevens; Talcott; Wang; Wineberry; and Wolfe.

Staff: Wayne Kawakami (786-7384).

Background: A large group of legislators, public assistance recipients, state agency staff, human service advocates, and academics conducted an extensive review of our state's public assistance program. The motivation for this review is the scheduled termination of the Family Independence Program (FIP) on June 30, 1993 and the desire to incorporate the positive aspects of the FIP demonstration project into the statewide Job Opportunities and Basic Skill Program (JOBS). Seven community forums were held around the state in June 1992 to receive input directly from recipients of public assistance and to develop a series of recommendations for a post FIP welfare employment and training program. Forums were held in Yakima, Everett, Seattle, Tacoma, Spokane, Vancouver, and Port Angeles. One hundred ten citizens testified on problems with the current welfare system which promote dependence and act as barriers to economic self-sufficiency.

Testimony at the seven forums held around the state in June, indicated that the majority of public assistance recipients who testified would rather be working. The problem experienced by many recipients is that it is difficult for parents on Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) to get, and keep a job if the barriers to employment are not addressed. The FIP and JOBS programs offer recipients the education, training, and support services to gain independence, but implementation problems and resource restrictions pose problems for recipients in utilizing everything these programs are capable of providing.

The legislation developed from this process seeks to prepare recipients of AFDC, through education and training, for employment at a level sufficient to care for their family. Short of that, the state will allow public assistance recipients who work to make up the difference between the state payment rate and the level of income sufficient to provide a living wage.

Summary of Bill: The Department of Social and Health Services will design a statewide program for recipients of aid to families with dependent children which provides varying intensities of education, work, and work experience for recipients. The department will consider the elimination of work disincentives, providing food cash assistance or electronic benefit transfer in lieu of food

stamps, and community work programs in the program design. The department, in consultation with the governor, will determine what federal statutory and rule changes are needed to implement the program. The department will seek necessary federal approval to eliminate the 100 hour rule for recipients of the Aid to Families with Dependent Children-Employable Program. The department will determine the most appropriate living situation for teenage recipients of aid to families with dependent children. If the teenage recipient does not abide by the department decision, grant payments to the teenager and his or her child will be terminated. Children living with court appointed guardians will be eligible to receive general assistance payments. The department is authorized to provide grants to community action agencies and other nonprofit organizations to assist recipients of aid to families with dependent children.

EFFECT OF SENATE AMENDMENT(S): The retention of earned income and the pilot project for Electronic Benefit Transfer are reinstated. Aid to Families with Dependent Children benefits for certain 18 to 20 year old students are allowed. Some target group compliance with the JOBS program is made voluntary. The process for obtaining federal waivers is simplified. Other provisions providing for assistance to children living with legal guardians, and the creation of a welfare reform task force are deleted. Sections of the bill with fiscal impact are made contingent on funding in the budget.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: (Human Services): Removing work disincentives and providing appropriate education, training, work experience, and support services will help people leave public assistance and become tax paying citizens.

(Appropriations): The policies in the bill are going in the right direction. Assistance is needed in order for poor people to become self-sufficient. The use of pilot programs should be reviewed. If the program is appropriate, it should be statewide.

Testimony Against: (Human Services): None.

(Appropriations): None.

Witnesses: (Human Services): Bernice Morehead, Department of Social and Health Services (neutral; likes concept); Ann Simons, Washington Women United (pro); Mary Murphy, League

of Women Voters (pro); Laurie Lippold, Children's Home Society (pro); Barbara Baker, Legal Services (pro); Gail Gosney, Children's Alliance Board Member (pro); Jean Colman, Welfare Rights Organizing Committee (pro), Tony Lee, Washington Association of Churches (pro); Margaret Casey, Washington State Catholic Conference (pro); Lonnie Johns-Brown, National Association of Social Workers (pro); and Nancy Ameidi, Citizen (pro).

(Appropriations): (In favor): Laurie Lippold, Children's Home Society; Margaret Casey, Children's Alliance; Bernice Morehead, DSHS; Kit Hawkins, Metropolitan Development Council; and Barb Baker, Evergreen Legal Services.

VOTE ON FINAL PASSAGE:

Yeas 98