

HOUSE BILL REPORT

E2SHB 2798

As Passed House
February 11, 1994

Title: An act relating to public assistance reform.

Brief Description: Making major changes to the welfare system.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Sommers, Thibaudeau, Cooke, Peery, Silver, Dorn, R. Meyers, Talcott, Valle, Carlson, Dunshee, Linville, Rust, Ballasiotes, Sehlin, Jacobsen, Foreman, Wolfe, Wineberry, Mastin, G. Fisher, Grant, Campbell, Brough, L. Thomas, B. Thomas, Lisk, McMorris, Chandler, Wood, Schoesler, Sheldon, Rayburn, Kremen, Brumsickle, Holm, Roland, Pruitt, Jones, Flemming, Horn, Kessler, Long, Shin, Moak, Finkbeiner, Quall, Conway, Springer, Tate, Mielke and Johanson).

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Human Services, February 3, 1994, DPS;
Appropriations, February 7, 1994, DP2S;
Passed House, February 11, 1994, 97-0.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Leonard, Chair; Thibaudeau, Vice Chair; Cooke, Ranking Minority Member; Talcott, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Brown; Caver; Karahalios; Patterson and Wolfe.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Lisk and Padden.

Staff: Dave Knutson (786-7146).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The second substitute bill be substituted therefor and the second substitute bill do pass. Signed by 26 members: Representatives Sommers, Chair; Valle, Vice Chair; Carlson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member;

Appelwick; Ballasiotes; Basich; Cooke; Dellwo; Dorn;
Dunshee; G. Fisher; Foreman; Jacobsen; Lemmon; Leonard;
Linville; H. Myers; Peery; Rust; Sehlin; Sheahan; Stevens;
Talcott; Wang; Wineberry and Wolfe.

Staff: Beth Redfield (786-7130).

Background: Teen pregnancies, inadequate emphasis on job placement, and long term receipt of income assistance grants are barriers to achieving economic independence.

Summary of Bill: When people apply for, or are reassessed through the Aid To Families With Dependent Children Program, they will receive family planning information and assistance from the Department of Social and Health Services or a contracted agency. The Department of Social and Health Services will train financial and social work staff to communicate the transitional nature of aid to families with dependent children; actively refer people to the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Program; provide family planning information and assistance, in consultation with the Department of Health. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction will provide grants to school districts for media campaigns that encourage individuals to delay sexual activity, pregnancy, and childbearing until they are prepared to support their children and that encourages sexual abstinence before marriage. The department is authorized, pending federal approval, to pay Job Opportunities Basic Skills Program participants a cash grant combining the aid to families with dependent children and food stamp benefit. The department will aggressively seek to maximize federal funds to the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Program. The department will incorporate job development into local welfare office activities. Recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children may volunteer in child care facilities if they are not participating in an education or work training program. Recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children who are under the age of 18 are presumed ineligible for assistance unless they live in one of four authorized living situations. The department is required to eliminate the 100 hour rule for two parent families on public assistance. Support enforcement will attempt to determine the identity of the noncustodial parent at the time of child's birth. The Office of Support Enforcement will notify consumer reporting agencies of all child support obligations.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Appropriation: Specific appropriations are made to the Department of Social and Health Services and the Evergreen State College, and unspecified appropriations are made to

the Department of Social and Health Services and Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Effective Date: Sections 6, 7, and 11 of the bill take effect July 1, 1994. Sections 12 and 13 take effect July 1, 1996. The remainder of the bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: (Human Services) Incentives for teenagers to go on welfare should be removed, long term recipients of public assistance should have their grants reduced as an incentive to work.

(Appropriations) Recipients have a work ethic, they just need opportunity. Education is very important in enabling recipients to get off public assistance and stay off. We need to be supportive of culture change at the Department of Social and Health Services, to have more coordination between Income Assistance and Children and Family Services, and involve recipients in developing their independence plan. The exemption from JOBS participation if caring for a child age three or less is consistent with federal law and more realistic given cost and availability of infant day care.

Testimony Against: (Human Services) Punitive measures against poor people should not be increased.

(Appropriations) If a recipient takes any job offered, she will be back on welfare soon. This recycling will cost more in the long run. The Superintendent of Public Instruction program of student-produced media campaigns excludes abortion alternatives or abstinence-based programs. The adult living situation required of minor recipients could include a boyfriend. This situation should be approved by a parent.

Witnesses: (Human Services) Representative Ebersole, Speaker of the House (pro); and Representative Sommers (pro); Liz Schott, Evergreen Legal Services (con); Dayna Micone (con); Cheryl Sabin (con); Ned Dolejsi, Washington State Catholic Conference (con); Barbara Pool (pro); Valera Fetterman (pro); Kathy Morefield, Fair Budget Action Campaign (con).

(Appropriations) (In favor) Barb McGinn and Valera Fetterman, private citizens; Kathy Morefield, Fair Budget Action Campaign; Laurie Lippold, The Children's Alliance; Lonnie Johns-Brown, NOW/NASW; (opposed) and Priscilla Martens, The Capitol Project.