

FINAL BILL REPORT

E2SHB 2798

PARTIAL VETO

C 299 L 94

Brief Description: Making major changes to the welfare system.

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).

House Committee on Human Services
House Committee on Appropriations
Senate Committee on Health & Human Services
Senate Committee on Ways & Means

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

Summary: When people apply for, or are reassessed through, the Aid To Families With Dependent Children Program (AFDC), 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; and 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 students to delay sexual activity, pregnancy, and childbearing until they are prepared to support their children and that encourages sexual abstinence before marriage. Community public health and safety networks may also fund student-designed media and community campaigns promoting sexual abstinence and delaying sexual activity and pregnancy or male parenting.

The Department of Social and Health Services is required to maximize federal funds for the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Program by aggressively seeking private and public funds as a match for the federal funds. The department will incorporate job development into local welfare office activities.

The Jobs Opportunity and Basic Skills Program is changed from a voluntary to a mandatory program. Within the federal requirements for participation, the following groups are established as priorities: (1) parents under age 24 with little or no work experience; (2) parents under age 24 without a high school or GED degree; and (3) recipients who have received assistance for 36 of the preceding 60 months. Also, at least one parent in a two parent household on assistance will participate in a work related activity at least 16 hours per week. AFDC recipients may volunteer in child care facilities and other volunteer organizations if they are not participating in an education or work training program. Recipients of assistance for 48 of the prior 60 months will have their grant payment reduced by 10 percent, and an additional 10 percent for each additional year they receive assistance. Exemptions are available if the recipients meet specific good cause exemptions. The recipients may earn income to make up for the grant reduction, and the earned income will not result in a dollar for dollar reduction in their grants. The department is required to eliminate the 100 hour rule for two parent families on AFDC.

The Department of Social and Health Services will determine the most appropriate living situation for an AFDC applicant under the age of 18. Parents of such an applicant are entitled to a hearing in superior court to challenge a decision by the department related to the most appropriate living situation for the applicant.

The Office of Support Enforcement must 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. It will also contract with collection agencies to collect arrearages in certain cases. When a negotiable instrument, such as a check, is received by the Office of Support Enforcement and is returned for insufficient funds, restitution will be sought from the payer of the child support order.

The Department of Health must submit an immunization assessment and enhancement proposal to reduce vaccine-preventable diseases among Washington's children. The

Legislative Budget Committee will conduct a program performance audit of the Department of Health's immunization program.

The state food donation act is modified by the addition of language from the model federal good samaritan food donation act.

A voluntary wage supplementation program is established in the Department of Social and Health Services to supplement wages paid by private employers to AFDC recipients. Local Employment Partnership Councils pilot this program, through job development and matching job seekers with employers. DSHS contracts with local public or private nonprofit organizations.

Participants in the wage supplementation program are paid a minimum of \$5 per hour and receive benefits equal to other employees. Training wages can be paid, if allowable under federal wage and hour law. Unspecified incentives are created to encourage employers to retain the workers for more than six months. Limitations on the types of positions for which the AFDC recipients would be allowed to qualify are already in current statute.

The program is aimed at the "hardest to employ" and those "at-risk of long-term dependence on welfare."

Votes on Final Passage:

House	97	0	
Senate	44	2	(Senate amended)
House	95	0	(House concurred)

Effective: June 9, 1994
July 1, 1994 (Sections 6,7 and 11)
July 1, 1996 (Sections 12 and 13)

Partial Veto Summary: The Governor vetoed the requirement that eligible persons participate in the job opportunities and basic skills program which emphasizes job readiness and vocational education. The jobs opportunities and basic skills program will continue to give first priority to volunteers. The age of a child before which the parent can refuse to participate in job training, education, or employment is kept at age six, instead of age three. The prohibition against pursuing a liberal arts degree at a four year school is removed.

The requirement that the Department of Social and Health Services notify consumer reporting agencies of child support obligations is removed. The office of support enforcement

will not be required to contract with private collection agencies to pursue arrearages which might consume a disproportionate share of the offices collection efforts. The office of support enforcement will not be required to seek restitution from a child support payer when the person pays with a check which is dishonored for non-sufficient funds, or when there is an IRS tax refund that must later be refunded to a joint filer under federal law.

The legislative budget committee is not required to conduct a program performance audit of the Department of Health's immunization program.