

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 2900

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Health & Long-Term Care, February 20, 1998

Title: An act relating to pro rata calculation of temporary assistance for needy families grants.

Brief Description: Providing for pro rata calculation of temporary assistance for needy families grants.

Sponsors: House Committee on Children & Family Services (originally sponsored by Representatives Cooke, Ballasiotes, McDonald, Boldt and Mitchell).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 2/20/98 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Deccio, Chair; Wood, Vice Chair; Benton, Strannigan and Wojahn.

Staff: Joanne Conrad (786-7472)

Background: Federal welfare reform (Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, "the Act") generally requires recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) to perform work activities as a condition of benefit receipt. The Act also allows states the option of sanctioning noncompliant welfare recipients on a pro rata basis. Washington State does not currently utilize pro rata sanctioning.

Currently, Washington State can sanction recipients in three steps: reduction of the head of household's share of the grant, the addition of a protective payee, and termination of grant assistance to the assistance unit. Pro rata reduction would decrease the family's grant amount by the percentage of work requirement unfulfilled by the recipient.

Summary of Bill: A feasibility study by the Department of Social and Health Services will report on the concept of pro rata grant reduction, its benefits, difficulties, and fiscal impact. The study includes examination of appropriate "good cause" exemptions, and methods and rules for preventing their abuse. It also provides recommendations on alternative calculation systems.

The report is due to the House Children and Family Services Committee on November 30, 1998, and the study sunsets on December 31, 1998.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: DSHS needs to know how to perform this sanction method without undue administrative expense. Organizations working with recipients believe the pro rata method to be an effective work incentive.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Suzette Cooke, prime sponsor (pro).