

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6110

As of April 15, 1997

Title: An act relating to implementing the federal personal responsibility and work opportunity reconciliation act of 1996.

Brief Description: Implementing the federal personal responsibility and work opportunity reconciliation act of 1996.

Sponsors: Senators Deccio, Wood, Benton, West, McDonald and Strannigan.

Brief History:

Staff: Joanne Conrad (786-7472)

Background: With the passage of federal welfare reform, states may, within some limits, design their own approach to public assistance. "Temporary Assistance for Needy Families" replaces "Aid to Families with Dependent Children" as a family support program. Under federal welfare reform, noncitizens are subject to different treatment regarding welfare eligibility.

Summary of Bill: The "Washington WorkFirst" program is established as the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program for Washington State. There is no legal entitlement to public assistance. New benefit standards limit the cash grant amount to the amount received in a prior state of residence, for those in Washington for less than one year. A 60-month lifetime limit on cash assistance is established.

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) may contract with religiously-affiliated organizations for some welfare to work services. Competitive contracting with public and private organizations for welfare to work services is required. Contracting-out for administrative services is permitted.

Tribes may establish their own TANF programs.

No counties may utilize federal exemptions to the food stamp work requirements applicable to nondisabled, 18 to 50 year olds without dependents.

Legal immigrants in the United States before enactment of the Federal Welfare Act (August 22, 1996) may receive TANF, food stamps, medical and general assistance benefits, as well as help in becoming citizens.

Immigrants are subject to sponsor deeming. Newly arriving immigrants (postenactment) are subject to a five-year federal bar on welfare benefit receipt, and may receive medical

assistance thereafter only if their sponsor dies. Seasonal workers have their income averaged for purposes of benefit determination.

A diversion assistance program is created. The community emergency assistance program is repealed.

Linkages to existing programs, including "school-to-work" and "jobs for the environment" are created. Entrepreneurial assistance is available.

Individual development accounts are allowed to save for educational, housing or business capitalization purposes.

TANF recipients are subject to work activity requirements. "Good cause" for failure to participate in work activities includes caring for a child under six if there is no formal or informal child care available, and DSHS fails to provide care, or if caring for a child under one year, until 1996, when the age for exemption becomes three months.

Child care benefits are provided on a sliding fee scale basis, with copayments starting at \$10, and benefits provided up to 175 percent of the federal poverty level. A study of child care affordability and availability is required. DSHS must train 250 recipients as child care providers.

DSHS is required to operate the TANF program within funding limits, or reduce grant levels.

Wage subsidy jobs, and community service jobs are established. Anti-displacement, worker safety, and some labor law protections apply. Grants are provided to those who work, on a pro rata basis.

Teen parents are required to live with parents, or other approved adults, which may not include the father of the teen's child if elements of statutory rape are present. Teens must work on school completion. Grandparents of the teen's baby are subject to deeming, for support of the teen and child.

Illegitimacy prevention goals, and abstinence education and promotion are established. Unintended pregnancy is studied by OFM.

Data-sharing between state agencies and law enforcement is detailed.

The act is subject to a referendum in the June 1997 special election.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill contains several effective dates. Please refer to the bill.