

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2686

As Amended by the Senate

Title: An act relating to definitions of income and resources.

Brief Description: Updating definitions of income and resources.

Sponsors: Representatives Tokuda and D. Sommers; by request of Department of Social and Health Services.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Children & Family Services: 1/26/00, 1/31/00 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/8/00, 97-0.

Senate Amended.

Passed Senate: 3/2/00, 46-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Permits the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to define resources to be considered in determining eligibility for cash, medical, and food assistance.
- Redefines "home" and "household furnishings and effects" to be consistent with federal food assistance regulations.
- Redefines the income definition to exclude in-kind income as countable income for cash and medical assistance, consistent with federal food assistance regulations.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives D. Sommers, Republican Co-Chair; Tokuda, Democratic Co-Chair; Boldt, Republican Vice Chair; Kagi, Democratic Vice Chair; Campbell; Dickerson; Eickmeyer; Kastama and Pflug.

Staff: Deborah Frazier (786-7152).

Background:

Federal regulation of the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program permits states to set income and resource definitions for cash assistance. Under state law, and the federally approved Medicaid state plan, income and resource definitions for cash assistance are also applicable for medical assistance. The federal Food Stamps Program specifies certain definitions for income and resources.

Currently, some of the Washington income and resource definitions for TANF, medical assistance, and food stamps are inconsistent. These inconsistencies can result in confusion for assistance recipients and administrators.

Summary of Bill:

House Bill 2686 amends public assistance statutes to:

- permits the DSHS to adopt rules regarding resources that may be considered for eligibility for cash, medical, and food assistance;
- redefines the resource definition of "home" and "household furnishings and effects" to be consistent with federal food assistance regulations; and
- redefines the income definition to exclude in-kind income as countable income for cash and medical assistance, consistent with federal food assistance regulations. Also deletes redundant language and references existing RCWs.

EFFECT OF SENATE AMENDMENT(S): Excludes consideration of resources in determining continuing eligibility for medical assistance for persons no longer receiving cash assistance.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: These definitional changes will improve understanding of eligibility rules by assistance recipients and administrators. Using consistent definitions across programs will improve efficiency.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: John Atherton, Department of Social and Health Services.