

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 1936

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Labor & Workforce Development, March 25, 1999

Title: An act relating to employability screens for recipients of temporary assistance for needy families.

Brief Description: Requiring employability screening for recipients of temporary assistance for needy families.

Sponsors: Representatives Tokuda, Boldt, D. Sommers and Santos.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Labor & Workforce Development: 3/23/99, 3/25/99 [DPA, DNPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Fairley, Chair; Franklin, Vice Chair; Kline and Wojahn.

Minority Report: Do not pass as amended.

Signed by Senator Hochstatter.

Staff: Joanne Conrad (786-7472)

Background: Currently, recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) do not undergo an initial employability screening. Instead they are directed to search for work, and if their search fails, they are assessed in order to identify barriers to employment. Those who do not find unsubsidized, paid employment are generally required to participate in an alternative WorkFirst work activity, aimed at employment, or to perform community service.

Two "good cause" exemptions can excuse a TANF recipient from WorkFirst program components, including the job search: a parent who has a child under one year, or who cannot obtain child care is exempt for "good cause."

Summary of Amended Bill: Additional good cause for failure to participate in TANF WorkFirst program components includes: being the victim of domestic violence, being incapacitated or caring for an incapacitated child, or being a nonparent relative age 55 or older and caring for a child on welfare. Domestic violence victims and those with incapacities, or caring for an incapacitated child, provide documentation in order to qualify for the good cause exemption. Work requirements are deferred for persons in these categories, and months on TANF are not counted towards the 60-month limit. Termination of the deferral occurs when the condition upon which it is based no longer exists.

Exemptions or deferrals are capped at 20 percent of TANF caseload. The requirement to refrain from deferring a client until 52 months on caseload is removed. DSHS facilitates placement of TANF recipients into work activities involving apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeship training.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill: Deferral from the job search component of WorkFirst, based upon employability screening, is replaced with a broad system of deferral from TANF work requirements and time limits for certain categories of recipients.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Better screening is needed to help TANF clients and potential employers and to identify barriers.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Representative Kip Tokuda, prime sponsor; Liz Dunbar, DSHS; Laurie Lippold, Children's Homes Society; Lonnie Johns-Brown, NOW.