

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## ESB 5163

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As Passed Senate, May 19, 1999

**Title:** An act relating to the WorkFirst program.

**Brief Description:** Modifying good cause reasons for failure to participate in WorkFirst program components.

**Sponsors:** Senators Brown, Kohl-Welles, Patterson, Wojahn and Eide.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Labor & Workforce Development: 2/2/99, 2/4/99 [DP].  
Passed Senate, 3/8/99, 34-12.

**First Special Session:** Passed Senate, 5/19/99, 32-11 (notice to reconsider).

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

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

**Staff:** Joanne Conrad (786-7472)

**Background:** When the state Legislature enacted the WorkFirst program in 1997, it included the concept that welfare recipients should become involved in work activities. Concerns existed that those without child care and those with very young infants might be unable to participate in work activities.

A "good cause" exemption for failure to participate in WorkFirst program components was created, allowing those without child care and parents with children under the age of one year to be excused from work activities. On June 30, 1999, the age of the young infant for purposes of this exemption is set to be reduced to 12 weeks.

**Summary of Bill:** The age of the infant for purposes of the "good cause" exemption from WorkFirst program components is maintained at one year of age until June 30, 2001. The Department of Social and Health Services reports to the Legislature on December 1, 2000, regarding implementation of the child care training program for WorkFirst; a market rate study of infant care; and the availability, affordability and accessibility of care.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Testimony For:** Infants need to bond with parents for well-being. There is a lack of infant child care slots.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** PRO: Senator Lisa Brown, prime sponsor; Liz Dunbar, DSHS; Marty Jacobs, WA Assn. for Education of Young Children; Charlotte Dedman, Child Care Action Council.