

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5655

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Higher Education, March 1, 1999

Title: An act relating to increasing access to education for recipients of temporary assistance for needy families.

Brief Description: Establishing the parents as scholars program.

Sponsors: Senators Kohl-Welles, Shin, Bauer, B. Sheldon, Fairley, Jacobsen and Rasmussen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 2/17/99, 3/1/99 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5655 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Kohl-Welles, Chair; Shin, Vice Chair; Bauer, Jacobsen, McAuliffe, Sheahan and B. Sheldon.

Staff: Natalie Adams (786-7444)

Background: In an effort to conform with federal welfare reform legislation, the Washington Legislature adopted the Washington Workfirst Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Act. The program seeks to encourage families to become financially independent from government assistance. Eligibility is limited to 60 months per adult and is dependent upon the recipient working while receiving aid. Without proper education or work force training, however, many individuals face difficulties in meeting the needs of their families without government assistance.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The Parents as Scholars Program is established as an extension of the Washington Workfirst Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Act. Student parents who have dependent children may receive assistance while attending an institution of higher education.

Families that qualify for temporary assistance may participate in the program. Applicants must meet state need grant requirements. The Department of Social and Health Services assesses applicants to determine whether the applicant has the aptitude and need for the program and whether the training or education sought by the individual is likely to result in employment that will support the family.

Students receiving assistance must participate in a combination of education, training, study or work for at least 20 hours per week, and must be enrolled full time with the expectation of making progress toward a degree, license or certificate.

The program is supported with funds other than those provided by Title IV-A of the Social Security Act so long as the state funds used for the program are counted toward the state's federal maintenance of effort requirement.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The department may offer the Parents as Scholars program to up to 3,000 parents annually. Participants must have worked in unsubsidized employment for 12 of the last 24 weeks before applying for the program. Participants receive up to two years of undergraduate education with the expectation of receiving a degree, license, or certificate.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: The requirements of the Workfirst program have negatively impacted many individuals, particularly single mothers. The Parents as Scholars program would provide opportunities for parents to become self sufficient and good role models for their children. However, many feel that the program should be expanded beyond the community and technical colleges.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Virginia Deforest, American Association of University Women (pro); Carol Albers, Federation of Private Career Schools and Colleges (with amendments); Cody Benson, Washington Student Lobby (pro); Carrie Day, Welfare Rights Student Organization Coalition (pro); Allison Morrell, Welfare Rights Organization Coalition (pro).