

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6241

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Labor & Workforce Development, February 3, 2000
Ways & Means, February 8, 2000

Title: An act relating to establishing performance measures and the setting of goals for earnings gains, job retention, and access to benefits that support work for the WorkFirst program.

Brief Description: Establishing WorkFirst performance measures.

Sponsors: Senators Fairley, Kohl-Welles, Brown, Shin, Kline, Fraser, Prentice, McAuliffe, Patterson, Eide, Rasmussen and Costa.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Labor & Workforce Development: 1/18/2000, 2/3/2000 [DPS, DNPS].

Ways & Means: 2/8/2000 [DP2S].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6241 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

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

Minority Report: Do not pass substitute.

Signed by Senator Hochstatter.

Staff: Elizabeth Mitchell (786-7430)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Second Substitute Senate Bill No. 6241 be substituted therefor, and the second substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Loveland, Chair; Bauer, Vice Chair; Brown, Vice Chair; Fairley, Fraser, Kline, Kohl-Welles, Rasmussen, B. Sheldon, Snyder, Spanel, Winsley and Wojahn.

Staff: Brian Sims (786-7431)

Background: The 1997 act creating the WorkFirst program (EHB 3901) requires earnings and job retention outcome measures. The Governor's WorkFirst performance report currently includes the following performance measures: 50 percent of WorkFirst clients will increase their earnings by 10 percent within one year of leaving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); 60 percent of WorkFirst clients will earn at least \$2500 per quarter for four consecutive quarters after leaving TANF for work.

There is concern that more extensive and long-term performance measures are needed to accurately evaluate WorkFirst participants' wage progression and job retention, and that customer service issues within the WorkFirst system need to be addressed.

Summary of Second Substitute Bill: A number of performance measures are established and the state population survey is expanded.

Earnings and Wages. The following median earnings and wage goals are established: an increase of 5 percent six months after beginning paid unsubsidized employment; an increase of 15 percent after one year; an increase of 20 percent after two years; and an increase of 25 percent after three years. The Department of Social and Health Services must report the starting wages of all WorkFirst participants who find paid unsubsidized employment on a quarterly basis.

Job Retention. The following job retention goals are established: 60 percent working full time one year after beginning paid unsubsidized employment; 65 percent working full time after two years; 70 percent working full time after three years; 70 percent working at least half time after one year; 75 percent working at least half time after two years; and 80 percent working at least half time after three years. Definitions of full time– and half time– are specified.

The Employment Security Department must publish on a quarterly basis a report that details the performance of the WorkFirst program in meeting the program goals of wage progression and job retention.

Access to Benefits Ratio. The following goal for access to benefits is established: 95 percent of people leaving TANF or participating in the TANF cash diversion program in a given quarter either will either be enrolled in work support benefits, not in need for such benefits. The Department of Social and Health Services must report the access to benefits ratio for each work support benefit on a quarterly basis.

Customer Service Standards. The Department of Social and Health Services must convene a work group which includes recipients of public assistance to establish customer service measures and goals. The department must report to the Legislature regarding the establishment of these goals by January 15, 2001, and must make a written report to the Legislature on the attainment of these goals twice per year.

State Population Survey. The Office of Financial Management is to expand the state population survey to obtain information about low income families' use of benefits, and must prepare a report every two years comparing the number of families eligible for benefits and the number of families accessing benefits.

Second Substitute Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: Requirements that DSHS obtain written documentation that the client has declined benefits would only be required if there is inadequate progress towards reaching the goal for the access to benefits ratio.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: Transportation assistance is eliminated from the definition of work support benefits. It is clarified that the state population survey takes place every two years, not annually, and the Office of Financial Management must report

to the Legislature every two years instead of every year. Technical corrections are made to the title.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Performance measures determine what agencies do. More specific performance goals for employment support are needed. DSHS needs to address customer service.

Testimony Against: The measures are difficult to understand and take two pages to explain.

Testified: PRO: Cassie Sauer, Children's Alliance; Tony Lee, Fremont Public Association; Erica Quimby, Dorothy Trasher; CON: Ken Miller, Office of Financial Management.