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**SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 2546**

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**State of Washington**

**56th Legislature**

**2000 Regular Session**

**By** House Committee on Children & Family Services (originally sponsored by Representatives Tokuda, D. Sommers, Rockefeller, Boldt, Veloria, Ballasiotes, Kenney, Radcliff, Lovick, Linville, Regala, Dickerson, McIntire, Grant, Santos, Carlson, Cody, Ogden, Anderson, Mitchell, Conway, Schual-Berke, Lantz, Edmonds, Ruderman, Wolfe, Keiser, Stensen, Haigh, Dunn, Wood, O'Brien, Kagi, Hurst and Kessler)

Read first time 02/02/2000. Referred to Committee on .

1 AN ACT Relating to establishing performance measures and the  
2 setting of goals for earnings gains, job retention, and access to  
3 benefits that support work for the WorkFirst program; adding new  
4 sections to chapter 74.08A RCW; and creating a new section.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE REGARDING EARNINGS  
7 GAINED AS A RESULT OF INVESTMENTS IN THE TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY  
8 FAMILIES PROGRAM. (1) The employment security department shall submit  
9 quarterly reports to the legislature about the earnings of WorkFirst  
10 participants who have found unsubsidized paid employment.

11 (2) The reports shall contain the following information:

12 (a) The median percentage earnings increase one year, two years,  
13 and three years after leaving the temporary assistance for needy  
14 families program. The median percentage earnings increase shall  
15 include both hourly wages and quarterly earnings;

16 (b) The percent with earnings above one hundred percent of the  
17 federal poverty level;

18 (c) The percent with earnings above two hundred percent of the  
19 federal poverty level; and

1 (d) For each quarter, the report shall compare former WorkFirst  
2 participants with similar workers who did not participate in WorkFirst.

3 (3) The report shall include all former WorkFirst participants  
4 since July 1997 and shall be submitted by December 1, 2000. Subsequent  
5 reports shall be submitted yearly.

6 (4) The hours worked and quarterly earnings used to measure  
7 earnings gains and job retention shall be based on the wage files  
8 collected and maintained by the employment security department. The  
9 hourly wage rate is defined as the quarterly earnings divided by the  
10 number of hours worked in that quarter. Participants for whom no  
11 earnings are reported shall be excluded from the calculation. Median  
12 rather than average earnings gains shall be used.

13 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** INFORMATION ABOUT RETURNS TO THE TEMPORARY  
14 ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES PROGRAM. (1) The department of social  
15 and health services shall submit to the legislature, on a yearly basis,  
16 a report that details the percentage of people who have returned to the  
17 temporary assistance for needy families program.

18 (2) The report shall include the number of families who have left  
19 the temporary assistance for needy families program now receiving  
20 unemployment compensation.

21 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** INFORMATION ABOUT WORK SUPPORT BENEFITS.  
22 (1) The department of social and health services shall develop  
23 informational materials that educate families about the difference  
24 between cash assistance and work support benefits. These materials  
25 must explain, among other facts, that the benefits are designed to  
26 support their employment; that there are no time limits on the receipts  
27 of work support benefits; and that immigration or residency status will  
28 not be affected by the receipt of benefits. These materials shall be  
29 posted in all community service offices and distributed to families.  
30 Materials must be available in multiple languages.

31 (2) When a family leaves the temporary assistance for needy  
32 families program, receives cash diversion assistance, or withdraws a  
33 temporary assistance for needy families application, the department of  
34 social and health services shall:

35 (a) Conduct an in-person interview with the family, educating them  
36 about the difference between cash assistance and work support benefits,

1 and offering them the opportunity to begin or to continue receiving  
2 work support benefits, so long as they are eligible;

3 (b) Contact the family by telephone and educate them about the  
4 differences between cash assistance and work support benefits and offer  
5 them the opportunity to begin or to continue receiving work support  
6 benefits, so long as they are eligible; or

7 (c) Mail the family educational materials about benefits, when the  
8 caseworker has documented three unsuccessful attempts to reach them by  
9 telephone, and offer them the opportunity to begin or to continue  
10 receiving work support benefits, so long as they are eligible.

11 (3) Work support benefits include food stamps, medicaid for all  
12 family members, medicaid or state children's health insurance program  
13 for children, and child care assistance.

14 (4) The department shall report annually to the legislature the  
15 number of families who have had exit interviews, been reached  
16 successfully by phone, and sent mail. The report shall also include  
17 the percentage of families who elect to continue each of the benefits  
18 and the percentage found ineligible by each substantive reason code.  
19 A substantive reason code shall not be "other." The report shall  
20 identify barriers to informing families about work support benefits and  
21 describe existing and future actions to overcome such barriers.

22 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS. (1) The  
23 department of social and health services shall convene a working group  
24 that includes stakeholders and recipients of public assistance to  
25 establish basic customer service performance measures and goals. The  
26 customer service measures and goals will seek to make support for  
27 working families a priority. Customer service measures may include,  
28 but are not limited to:

29 (a) Hours of operation that allow working families to get services  
30 without missing work;

31 (b) Streamlining requirements to make it easier for working  
32 families to begin and continue to use supportive benefits;

33 (c) Wait times;

34 (d) Systems for answering and returning phone calls in a timely  
35 manner;

36 (e) Access to benefits that support work;

37 (f) Access to job training and education; and

1 (g) Access to services for families with limited literacy or  
2 English skills, and families with special needs.

3 (2) The department of social and health services shall report to  
4 the legislature by January 2001, and make available to the public, the  
5 establishment of customer service measures and goals, and the  
6 departmental action to assure the goals are being met. Twice a year,  
7 the department of social and health services shall submit a written  
8 progress report to the legislature on the success of meeting the  
9 customer service goals.

10 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** Captions used in this act are not any part  
11 of the law.

12 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** Sections 1 through 4 of this act are each  
13 added to chapter 74.08A RCW.

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