

---

**SENATE BILL 6241**

---

**State of Washington**

**56th Legislature**

**2000 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Fairley, Kohl-Welles, Brown, Shin, Kline, Fraser, Prentice, McAuliffe, Patterson, Eide, Rasmussen and Costa

Read first time 01/11/2000. Referred to Committee on Labor & Workforce Development.

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 new sections.

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

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** LEGISLATIVE INTENT AND FINDINGS. The  
7 legislature finds that the implementation of the Washington WorkFirst  
8 temporary assistance for needy families act has resulted in a  
9 substantial reduction in single-parent and two-parent family caseloads.  
10 The legislature also finds that many of the WorkFirst participants who  
11 have found unsubsidized paid employment are working in jobs that result  
12 in family incomes that are close to or below the federal poverty line.  
13 The legislature also finds that families who are living at or close to  
14 the federal poverty line have a higher risk of returning to public  
15 assistance and face many challenges in helping their children succeed  
16 in school and prepare for the jobs of the future. The legislature also  
17 finds that many families who should be receiving supportive benefits  
18 such as medicaid, child care, and food stamps are not receiving them.

1 It is the intent of the legislature to ensure that the WorkFirst  
2 program leads to substantial increases in hourly wages and quarterly  
3 earnings, and high levels of job retention. The legislature  
4 acknowledges that receipt of food stamps, medicaid, and child care  
5 benefits provide wage supports that can raise families' standard of  
6 living and prevent families from returning to cash assistance because  
7 they need health care, child care, or are hungry.

8 It is the intent of the legislature to adopt performance measures  
9 and goals for increases in hourly wages, quarterly earnings, job  
10 retention, and access to benefits that support work for WorkFirst  
11 participants who have entered unsubsidized paid employment. It is also  
12 the intent of the legislature to direct the department of social and  
13 health services to establish and meet customer service measures and  
14 goals for the WorkFirst program. These measures shall be used to  
15 assess the effectiveness of the WorkFirst program in promoting a rising  
16 standard of living, stable employment, and career advancement for  
17 WorkFirst participants who enter unsubsidized paid employment. It is  
18 the intent of the legislature that the program's performance in  
19 achieving these goals shall be published and made available to the  
20 legislature and the general public on a quarterly basis.

21 The legislature recognizes that many families who are working need  
22 supportive services such as medicaid, child care, and food stamps, and  
23 that the current structure of service delivery often requires families  
24 to miss work in order to get those services. Because one of the goals  
25 of the WorkFirst program is to support working families, the  
26 legislature intends for changes to be made in customer service and  
27 service delivery to ensure that working families can get services  
28 without missing work or jeopardizing their employment.

29 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** PROGRAM GOALS AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES FOR  
30 EARNINGS GAINS. (1) The legislature establishes the following median  
31 earnings gains goals for all WorkFirst participants who find  
32 unsubsidized paid employment:

- 33 (a) Five percent median earnings gain six months after employment;  
34 (b) Ten percent median earnings gain one year after employment;  
35 (c) Twenty percent median earnings gain two years after employment;  
36 (d) Twenty-five percent median earnings gain three years after  
37 employment;

1 (e) Ten percent median earnings gain between the first and second  
2 year of employment; and

3 (f) Five percent median earnings gain between the second and third  
4 years of employment.

5 (2) The goals under subsection (1) of this section shall include  
6 both hourly wages and quarterly earnings and shall be measured and  
7 reported in the following manner:

8 (a) All WorkFirst participants who have found unsubsidized paid  
9 employment shall be included in the measurement of earnings gains. All  
10 of the wages used in these measures shall be adjusted for inflation  
11 using the federal consumer price index in order to ensure that the  
12 state is accurately assessing the inflation adjusted wage and earnings  
13 gains for former WorkFirst participants. The hours worked and  
14 quarterly earnings used to measure earnings gains and job retention  
15 shall be based on the wage files collected and maintained by the  
16 employment security department.

17 (b)(i) The hourly wage rate at employment is defined as the  
18 quarterly earnings for the first full calendar quarter after finding  
19 unsubsidized paid employment divided by the number of hours worked in  
20 that quarter.

21 (ii) The hourly wage rate at six months after employment is defined  
22 as the quarterly earnings in the third full calendar quarter after  
23 finding unsubsidized paid employment divided by the number of hours  
24 worked in that quarter.

25 (iii) The hourly wage rate at one year after employment is defined  
26 as the quarterly earnings in the fifth full calendar quarter after  
27 finding unsubsidized paid employment divided by the number of hours  
28 worked in that quarter.

29 (iv) The hourly wage rate at two years after employment is defined  
30 as the quarterly earnings in the ninth full calendar quarter after  
31 finding unsubsidized paid employment divided by the number of hours  
32 worked in that quarter.

33 (v) The hourly wage rate at three years after employment is defined  
34 as the quarterly earnings in the thirteenth full calendar quarter after  
35 finding unsubsidized paid employment divided by the number of hours  
36 worked in that quarter.

37 (c)(i) The quarterly earnings at employment are defined as the  
38 quarterly earnings in the first full calendar quarter after finding  
39 unsubsidized paid employment.

1 (ii) The quarterly earnings six months after employment are defined  
2 as the quarterly earnings in the third full calendar quarter after  
3 finding unsubsidized paid employment.

4 (iii) The quarterly earnings one year after employment are defined  
5 as the quarterly earnings in the fifth full calendar quarter after  
6 finding unsubsidized paid employment.

7 (iv) The quarterly earnings two years after employment are defined  
8 as the quarterly earnings in the ninth full calendar quarter after  
9 finding unsubsidized paid employment.

10 (v) The quarterly earnings three years after finding unsubsidized  
11 paid employment are defined as the quarterly earnings in the thirteenth  
12 full calendar quarter after finding unsubsidized paid employment.

13 (d) The percentage hourly wage gains or losses shall be calculated  
14 by dividing the:

15 (i) Hourly wage rate six months after employment by the hourly wage  
16 rate at employment;

17 (ii) Hourly wage rate one year after employment by the hourly wage  
18 rate at employment;

19 (iii) Hourly wage rate two years after employment by the hourly  
20 wage rate at employment;

21 (iv) Hourly wage rate three years after employment by the hourly  
22 wage rate at employment;

23 (v) Hourly wage rate two years after employment by the hourly wage  
24 rate at one year after employment; and

25 (vi) Hourly wage rate at three years after employment by the hourly  
26 wage rate two years after employment.

27 (e) The percentage quarterly wage gains or losses shall be  
28 calculated by dividing the:

29 (i) Quarterly earnings six months after employment by the quarterly  
30 earnings at employment;

31 (ii) Quarterly earnings one year after employment by the quarterly  
32 earnings at employment;

33 (iii) Quarterly earnings two years after employment by the  
34 quarterly earnings at employment;

35 (iv) Quarterly earnings three years after employment by the  
36 quarterly earnings at employment;

37 (v) Quarterly earnings two years after employment by the quarterly  
38 earnings at one year after employment; and

1 (vi) Quarterly earnings three years after employment by the  
2 quarterly earnings two years after employment.

3 (f) The median earnings gains for all hourly wages and quarterly  
4 earnings measures are defined as the midpoint of the distribution of  
5 the percentage earnings gains for all WorkFirst participants who found  
6 unsubsidized paid employment. This definition applies to both hourly  
7 wages and quarterly earnings gains.

8 (g) Participants for whom no earnings are reported in the third,  
9 fifth, ninth, or thirteenth quarters shall be excluded from the measure  
10 for that particular quarter. For example, if a participant has  
11 earnings in the first quarter but none in the fifth quarter, they will  
12 be excluded from the measure for the fifth quarter. The participant  
13 would still be included in the measures for subsequent quarters, the  
14 ninth or thirteenth during which they report earnings.

15 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** PROGRAM GOALS AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES FOR  
16 JOB RETENTION. (1) The legislature establishes the following full-time  
17 and half-time employment and job retention goals for all WorkFirst  
18 participants who find unsubsidized paid employment:

19 (a) Sixty percent are working full-time one year after finding  
20 unsubsidized paid employment;

21 (b) Sixty-five percent are working full-time two years after  
22 finding unsubsidized paid employment;

23 (c) Seventy percent are working full-time three years after finding  
24 unsubsidized paid employment;

25 (d) Seventy percent are working at least half-time one year after  
26 finding unsubsidized paid employment;

27 (e) Seventy-five percent are working at least half-time two years  
28 after finding unsubsidized paid employment; and

29 (f) Eighty percent are working at least half-time three years after  
30 finding unsubsidized paid employment.

31 (2) It is the intent of the legislature that the reports mandated  
32 in this act shall include all WorkFirst participants who have entered  
33 unsubsidized paid employment since the start of the WorkFirst program  
34 in July 1997.

35 (a) The employment security department shall publish on a quarterly  
36 basis a report that details the performance of the WorkFirst program in  
37 meeting the program goals of wage progression and job retention. These  
38 reports shall be submitted to the appropriate legislative committees

1 and made available to the public each quarter. Given the legislature's  
2 goal of encouraging substantial increases in earnings and job  
3 retention, the department shall develop reports that track the  
4 performance of participants back to the start of the program in July  
5 1997. These quarterly reports shall document the performance of each  
6 group of WorkFirst participants who enter unsubsidized paid employment  
7 based on the first quarter that they found unsubsidized paid employment  
8 after entering the WorkFirst program. For example, the WorkFirst  
9 participants who found employment in the third quarter of 1997 shall  
10 have their performance tracked over a three-year period. Each  
11 subsequent group of participants who found employment in the following  
12 quarters shall be tracked separately. Each quarterly report shall  
13 report separately on each group of participants who found unsubsidized  
14 paid employment in separate quarters.

15 (b) The employment security department shall submit its first  
16 report to the legislature by September 2, 2000. This initial report  
17 shall include earnings and job retention information on all WorkFirst  
18 participants who found unsubsidized paid employment since the start of  
19 the program in July 1997 through December 31, 1999.

20 (c) The department shall submit additional reports to the  
21 legislature on a quarterly basis on October 1st, January 1st, April  
22 1st, and July 1st of each year using the methodology outlined in this  
23 act. Each report shall add new groups of WorkFirst participants who  
24 find unsubsidized paid employment in subsequent quarters.

25 (d) Working full-time is defined as unsubsidized paid employment at  
26 least thirty-five hours per week and shall be determined by dividing  
27 the number of hours worked in the relevant calendar quarter by thirteen  
28 weeks. Working full-time is also defined as attending school full-time  
29 or attending school part-time and working part-time.

30 (e) For the purposes of this section, working half-time is defined  
31 as unsubsidized paid employment and/or enrollment in education or job  
32 training at least twenty hours per week and shall be determined by  
33 dividing the number of hours worked in the relevant calendar quarter by  
34 thirteen weeks.

35 (f) Working full-time or half-time and working one, two, or three  
36 years after finding unsubsidized paid employment shall be measured in  
37 the fifth, ninth, and thirteenth full calendar quarters, respectively,  
38 after the WorkFirst participant entered unsubsidized paid employment.

1 (g) Attending school is defined only as participating in education  
2 and training provided by state-funded community and technical colleges.  
3 Student attendance data will be provided to the employment security  
4 department from the state board for community and technical colleges.

5 (h) All WorkFirst participants who enter unsubsidized paid  
6 employment shall be counted in the measures of working full-time and  
7 working half-time.

8 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** ACCESS TO BENEFITS THAT SUPPORT WORK. (1)

9 The legislature establishes the following goals for access to benefits  
10 that support work for all WorkFirst participants who leave the  
11 temporary assistance for needy families program or participate in the  
12 temporary assistance for needy families cash diversion program.

13 (a) Ninety percent of families are enrolled, have declined in  
14 writing, or are ineligible for a substantive reason for each of the  
15 work support benefits within six months of the effective date of this  
16 act. This is intended to allow for a phase-in period.

17 (b) Ninety-five percent of families are enrolled, have declined in  
18 writing, or are ineligible for a substantive reason for each of the  
19 work support benefits thereafter.

20 (2) Work support benefits are defined as: Food stamps; medicaid  
21 for all family members, children and adults; and child care assistance.

22 (3) Substantive reasons are required for determining families  
23 ineligible, and families must be notified of the reason for their  
24 ineligibility. Case files must contain documented evidence of  
25 ineligible status or written documentation that the client has declined  
26 the benefit. The termination reason code of other is not a substantive  
27 reason for determining families ineligible.

28 (4) Families who do not want to receive one of the benefits must  
29 decline it in writing after being educated about the differences  
30 between cash assistance and work support benefits, and must be told  
31 that the benefits are designed to support their employment.

32 (5) This measure is prospective. The department is not expected to  
33 measure access to benefits for those families who have left temporary  
34 assistance for needy families prior to the effective date of this act.

35 (6) The department shall report to the legislature on a quarterly  
36 basis and make available to the public the percentage of families who  
37 have work support benefits, have declined them in writing, or are

1 ineligible for a substantive reason as defined in subsection (2) of  
2 this section for each of the work support benefits.

3 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS. The department  
4 shall convene a working group that includes stakeholders and recipients  
5 of public assistance to establish basic customer service performance  
6 measures and goals. The customer service measures and goals will seek  
7 to make support for working families a priority. Customer service  
8 measures may include, but are not limited to: Hours of operation that  
9 allow working families to get services without missing work;  
10 streamlining requirements to make it easier for working families to  
11 begin and continue using supportive benefits; wait times; access to  
12 benefits that support work; access to job training and education; and  
13 access to services for families with limited literacy or English  
14 skills, and families with special needs.

15 The department shall report to the legislature by January 2001 and  
16 make available to the public the establishment of customer service  
17 measures and goals, the process for agreeing on those measures and  
18 goals, and departmental action to assure the goals are being met. The  
19 department shall make a written report to the legislature on the  
20 ongoing attainment of customer service goals twice per year.

21 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** Captions used in this act are not any part  
22 of the law.

23 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 7.** Sections 2 through 5 of this act are each  
24 added to chapter 74.08A RCW.

--- END ---