
**Children & Family Services
Committee**

HB 1465

Brief Description: Modifying exemptions of temporary assistance for needy families.

Sponsors: Representatives Boldt, Mielke and McMahan.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Limits the TANF hardship exemption to recipients who are physically or mentally incapacitated and recipients who are caring for a physically or mentally incapacitated family member.

Hearing Date: 2/10/03

Staff: Cynthia Forland (786-7152).

Background:

In 1996, the federal government enacted welfare reform. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) shifted the emphasis of the federal program to a "Work First" approach. This approach is characterized by the idea that holding down a job and earning a paycheck is the best way for families to support themselves and leave poverty and government assistance behind. In 1997, Washington enacted its version of welfare reform.

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) began in 1997. The program provides cash grants, employment skills training, child care and other services for eligible families. A family that includes an adult can receive TANF benefits for a maximum of 60 months during his or her lifetime. The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) may exempt a recipient and the recipient's family from the 60-month time limit by reason of hardship or family violence. Under federal law, the number of recipients and families exempted from the time limit requirement cannot exceed 20 percent of the average monthly TANF caseload of the state.

In November 2001, the Governor announced a time-limit extension for certain TANF

recipients:

- Persons with physical or mental disabilities so chronic and severe that they cannot be expected to work, primary caregivers of a disabled child or relative, and older adults caring for related children. These recipients are exempt from the 60-month time limit as long as they have minor children in their home.
- Parents receiving TANF who are fully participating in the WorkFirst requirements. These extensions will be temporary and periodically reviewed.
- Persons who refuse to participate. The parents in this category will lose their TANF grant; however, the Child-Safety Net Payments program managed by a third party will be provided to ensure that children in these households continue to have their basic needs met. The payment will be 60% of the family's TANF grant amount and protective payees will use that money to pay for rent, utilities, and other items necessary to support the children.

Summary of Bill:

The hardship exemption is narrowed to include only the following: those recipients who are physically or mentally incapacitated to a degree that does not allow them to meet the participation requirements of the WorkFirst program; and those recipients caring for a physically or mentally incapacitated family member.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.