
**Children & Family Services
Committee**

HB 1589

Brief Description: Increasing the amount of vocational education that qualifies as a work activity under WorkFirst.

Sponsors: Representatives Kenney, Jarrett, Kagi, Priest, Sells, Fromhold, Walsh, Ormsby, Linville, Hasegawa, Chase, Blake, McCoy, Moeller, O'Brien, Santos, Hudgins, Wood and McDermott.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Extends to 24 months the period of time that a WorkFirst program participant may engage in vocational educational training as a work activity.

Hearing Date: February 14, 2005.

Staff: Cynthia Forland (786-7152).

Background:

In 1996, the federal government enacted welfare reform, shifting the emphasis of the federal program to a "work first" approach. In 1997, Washington enacted its version of welfare reform, establishing the WorkFirst program. The WorkFirst program emphasizes the importance of gaining employment and staying employed.

Participants in the WorkFirst program are required to participate in work or work-related activities on a full-time basis. As defined by state law, work activities include the following:

- unsubsidized paid employment;
- subsidized paid employment;
- on-the-job training;
- job search and job readiness assistance;
- community service programs;
- vocational educational training;
- job skills training directly related to employment;
- education directly related to employment, in the case of a recipient who has not received a high school diploma or a GED;
- satisfactory attendance at secondary school or in a course of study leading to a GED, in the case of a recipient who has not completed secondary school or received such a certificate;

- the provision of child care services to an individual who is participating in a community service program; and
- internships or practicums.

Participants in the WorkFirst program may engage in vocational educational training as a work activity for a period of up to 12 months.

Summary of Bill:

Participants in the WorkFirst program may engage in vocational educational training as a work activity for a period of up to 24 months.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 28, 2005.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.