

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5578

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As of February 3, 2005

**Title:** An act relating to vocational educational training as a work activity under Washington WorkFirst.

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

**Sponsors:** Senators Kohl-Welles, Schmidt, Pridemore, Rockefeller, Rasmussen, Shin, McAuliffe and Kline.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Human Services & Corrections: 2/3/05.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

**Staff:** Edith Rice (786-7444)

**Background:** Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients in Washington participate in the WorkFirst program. The focus of the WorkFirst program is full time unsubsidized employment for all participants unless they have a "good cause" for not participating. Recipients who have never had a job are expected to prepare themselves to become employed, by participating in a "work activity". "Work activity" can include paid employment, participation in a work-study program, on the job training, job search, vocational training, a GED program, or an internship for example. Current WorkFirst recipients engaging in vocational educational training as a "work activity", are limited to twelve months of vocational education training.

**Summary of Bill:** WorkFirst participants engaging in vocation educational training as a "work activity" can do so for twenty-four months.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 31, 2005.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

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

**Testimony For:** Financial independence is key for victims of domestic violence. Education is critical to attaining this independence. Lack of long term training opportunities is a major barrier for folks who want to get off public assistance. Extending vocational training will help parents get better jobs. Most states allow for a longer period of vocational training than we do. This allows people to get off TANF and stay off. It will get people out of poverty into a family wage job.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Who Testified:** PRO: Tyra Lindquist, WA State Coalition Against Domestic Violence; Jennifer Thornton, State Board for Community & Technical Colleges; Shannon Blood, private citizen; Tony Lee, Fremont Public Assn.; Tara Frantz; Mindy Bergen, Welfare Rights Organization Coalition.