

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 6336

As Passed Senate, February 9, 2006

Title: An act relating to the definition of income for public assistance.

Brief Description: Requesting a federal exemption regarding the definition of income for public assistance.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections (originally sponsored by Senators Haugen, Prentice, Fairley, Oke, Fraser, Swecker, Shin, Kline, Rockefeller, Eide, Kohl-Welles, Keiser, McAuliffe, Rasmussen, Franklin, Thibaudeau, Jacobsen, Brown and Sheldon).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 1/17/06, 1/31/06 [DPS].

Passed Senate: 2/9/06, 45-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6336 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Hargrove, Chair; Regala, Vice Chair; Stevens, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Carrell, McAuliffe and Thibaudeau.

Staff: Indu Thomas (786-7459)

Background: States are required by federal law to establish eligibility criteria for receipt of public assistance. State law authorizes the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to establish the types of income which are to be included or disregarded in income computation. The housing allowance received by military personnel or veterans is currently included in the computation of income.

Summary of Bill: The Department is required to request a waiver from the federal government for the purpose of exempting housing assistance or housing vouchers received by military personnel from the computation of income for purposes of determining eligibility for food stamps and maternity support services.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For: The military has increased the amount of military housing vouchers due to the privatization of housing off base. Many of the youngest and neediest of mothers who were

previously eligible for in-home maternity support services are now ineligible because of this change.

These families remain eligible for WIC services, as the federal government has required that the housing allowance not be included for income calculations with respect to WIC. However, medical coupons and food stamps will no longer be provided to those in the military. These services are particularly necessary for the young people placed in remote military stations such as the naval station on Whidbey Island.

There can be some very intense and difficult times for the young people who are displaced from their home communities and support systems as they serve the nation. The in-home nursing visits are providing an alternative support system to these inexperienced young mothers. These services are critical for the welfare of these young mothers and their newborn children.

Testimony Against: None.

Who Testified: PRO: Senator Haugen, prime sponsor; Karen Parnell & Melissa Self, Skagit County Community Action Agency.