

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6629

As of January 24, 2006

Title: An act relating to providing working connections child care for certain temporary assistance for needy families recipients.

Brief Description: Providing working connections child care for certain temporary assistance for needy families recipients.

Sponsors: Senators Kohl-Welles, Pridemore, Keiser, Brown, Regala, Thibaudeau and Kline.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 1/23/06.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Staff: Shani Bauer (786-7468)

Background: A Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipient with the Department of Social and Health Services is required to participate in WorkFirst activities. The WorkFirst program offers services and activities designed to help people in low-income families find jobs and become self-sufficient.

A person entering the WorkFirst program works with a case manager to develop an Individual Responsibility Plan (IRP). The IRP describes the WorkFirst activities the person must participate in and what services will be provided so the person is able to participate.

With some restrictions, educational, vocational, and training activities are permissible activities in the IRP. The educational activity must fit within specific categories designed to prepare the person for obtaining employment as quickly as possible, and, in most cases, must be combined with employment or a job search.

- Basic education includes classes designed to assist the person in completing high school or getting a General Equivalency Diploma (GED).
- Vocational education is training that leads to a degree or certificate in a specific occupation and is limited to a period of twelve months.
- Job skills training is generally short-term training to obtain specific skills directly related to employment but not tied to a specific occupation.

Postsecondary education is not a term currently used in defining eligible WorkFirst educational activities. The general definition of "postsecondary education" includes any education beyond the high school level including a public university, college, community college, or vocational-technical institute.

Under current regulations, a WorkFirst participant who is also a TANF recipient is eligible to receive Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) up to sixteen hours per day for participation in WorkFirst activities.

The WCCC program serves an average of 36,760 families a month. In 2004, approximately 23 percent of WCCC cases were classified as a TANF case.

Summary of Bill: A TANF recipient who is meeting his or her Individual Responsibility Plan requirements and is eligible for WCCC must be eligible to receive child care for all the hours the recipient is working and enrolled in an educational, vocational, or training program.

This bill includes a legislative finding that there is a shortage of skilled workers in Washington for jobs requiring a postsecondary education. The legislative intent is to provide WCCC to TANF recipients so they can complete postsecondary education.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 19, 2006.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For: The main challenge for an individual to become self-sufficient is the need for child care while working and attending school. The WorkFirst Program directs recipients to employment and education leading to low wage service industry jobs where there is little chance for advancement, healthcare, or a living wage. If a recipient can be supported with child care while obtaining a better education, the recipient will be able to obtain a higher paying job and will spend a shorter time on public assistance in the long run. Washington should join the rest of the nation in providing child care for all types of educational activities.

Testimony Against: None

Who Testified: PRO: Monica Peabody, Welfare Rights Organizing Coalition; Holly Jones, WROC; Tony Lee, Fremont Public Association.

CON: No one.