

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6411

As of January 30, 2012

Title: An act relating to the WorkFirst program.

Brief Description: Concerning expenditures of the WorkFirst program.

Sponsors: Senators Regala, Stevens, Hargrove and Shin.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 1/31/12.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Staff: Jennifer Strus (786-7316)

Background: Creation of the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) Program. Before 1997 Washington operated a welfare program for low-income families with children called Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). If a family had children under the age of 18 years and met income and resource requirements, the family was entitled to cash assistance under AFDC and medical coverage under Medicaid.

In 1996 the United States Congress enacted the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. This act replaced the AFDC program with a new program called the TANF program. Under this federally funded program for public assistance, the states were required to implement reforms as set forth by Congress. Instead of an uncapped federal funding formula based upon the state's caseload, a capped federal block grant was provided to the states.

WorkFirst. In 1997 the Legislature passed Engrossed House Bill 3901, which implemented the reforms required by Congress. To receive the block grant authorized under the federal legislation, the states were required to establish a program to move TANF recipients into permanent jobs. Under the federal TANF legislation, the receipt of continued assistance was conditioned upon the individual's participation in work activities. In response to this requirement under the federal law, the Legislature created the Washington WorkFirst program (WorkFirst).

When WorkFirst began in 1997, it was decided that the heads of the partner agencies listed above would form the WorkFirst SubCabinet Structure. The subcabinet is comprised of the

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heads of the following state agencies: Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), the Department of Early Learning, the Department of Commerce, the Employment Security Department, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges and the Office of Financial Management. The group is chaired by the secretary of DSHS and meets several times a year to coordinate and make decisions about high-level policy and budget issues.

The TANF Block Grant. Under the 1997 state legislation, DSHS was required to operate WorkFirst. Under the new statute, the full amount of the block grant, as well as any state funds appropriated by the Legislature, were required to be appropriated to DSHS to carry out the provisions of WorkFirst, including child care programs. DSHS was permitted to expend funds in any manner to effectively accomplish outcome measures defined in the legislation, rather than by specific appropriation by the Legislature. The expenditure of those funds was overseen by the WorkFirst subcabinet. DSHS was required to monitor expenditures against the appropriation levels provided.

Summary of Bill: The provisions requiring the full amount of the TANF block grant and any state funds to be appropriated to DSHS is removed. The language allowing DSHS to expend the TANF block grant and any state funds in any manner that will accomplish the outcome measures in statute is also removed. Language related to prior fiscal biennia is removed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on July 1, 2012.