
HOUSE BILL 2518

State of Washington 64th Legislature 2016 Regular Session

By Representatives Sawyer, Walsh, Kagi, Kilduff, Zeiger, Reykdal, Frame, McBride, Ormsby, Walkinshaw, Gregerson, Bergquist, and Stanford

Read first time 01/14/16. Referred to Committee on Early Learning & Human Services.

1 AN ACT Relating to reducing intergenerational poverty; and adding
2 a new chapter to Title 74 RCW.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds that
5 intergenerational poverty, which passes from parents to children,
6 should be distinguished from situational poverty, which occurs after
7 an event like losing employment. Intergenerational poverty can affect
8 the lives of many future children and generations without the
9 development of specific strategies to stop this cycle.

10 (2) The legislature finds that it is necessary to bring together
11 state agencies and other stakeholders to collect data regarding
12 intergenerational poverty and develop two generation-specific
13 strategies to provide families the support they need to overcome a
14 history of poverty.

15 (3) The creation of an intergenerational poverty tracking system,
16 an intergenerational poverty reform commission, an intergenerational
17 poverty advisory committee, and an annual report provided by the
18 commission, lay the groundwork in Washington for reducing
19 intergenerational poverty.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** The definitions in this section apply
2 throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires
3 otherwise.

4 (1) "Commission" means the commission on intergenerational
5 poverty reform.

6 (2) "Cycle of poverty" or "poverty cycle" means the set of
7 factors or events by which the long-term poverty of a person is
8 likely to continue and be experienced by each child of the person
9 when the child becomes an adult unless there is outside intervention.

10 (3) "Intergenerational poverty" means poverty in which two or
11 more successive generations of a family continue in the cycle of
12 poverty and governmental dependence, and is not situational poverty.

13 (4) "Poverty" means the state of a person who lacks a usual or
14 socially acceptable amount of money or material possessions as
15 demonstrated by the person's income level being at or below the
16 United States poverty level as defined by the most recently revised
17 poverty income guidelines as published by the United States
18 department of health and human services in the federal register.

19 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** (1) The department shall establish and
20 maintain a system to track intergenerational poverty, which must:

21 (a) Identify groups that have a high risk of experiencing
22 intergenerational poverty;

23 (b) Identify incidents, patterns, and trends that explain or
24 contribute to intergenerational poverty;

25 (c) Assist case workers, social scientists, and government
26 officials in the study and development of effective and efficient
27 plans and programs to help individuals and families in the state to
28 break the cycle of poverty; and

29 (d) Gather and track available local, state, and national data
30 on:

31 (i) Official poverty rates;

32 (ii) Child poverty rates;

33 (iii) Years spent by individuals in childhood poverty;

34 (iv) Years spent by individuals in adult poverty; and

35 (v) Related poverty information.

36 (2) In implementing the intergenerational poverty tracking
37 system, the department shall:

1 (a) Use available data in the tracking system, including public
2 assistance data, census data, and other data made available to the
3 department;

4 (b) Develop and implement methods to integrate, compare, analyze,
5 and validate the data for the purposes described in subsection (1) of
6 this section;

7 (c) Protect the privacy of individuals living in poverty by using
8 and distributing data within the tracking system in compliance with
9 RCW 74.04.060, and other applicable state and federal laws;

10 (d) Include in the annual written report described in section 8
11 of this act, a report on the data, findings, and potential uses of
12 the tracking system.

13 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** There is created the Washington
14 intergenerational poverty reform commission composed of:

15 (1) The following voting members:

16 (a) The secretary of the department or his or her designee;

17 (b) The secretary of health or his or her designee;

18 (c) The superintendent of public instruction or his or her
19 designee;

20 (d) The executive director of the state board for community and
21 technical colleges;

22 (e) The commissioner of the employment security department or his
23 or her designee;

24 (f) The director of the department of commerce or his or her
25 designee; and

26 (g) The director of the department of early learning;

27 (2) The chair of the intergenerational poverty advisory committee
28 created in section 7 of this act as a nonvoting member.

29 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** (1) The secretary of the department or his
30 or her designee shall serve as chair of the commission.

31 (2) The chair:

32 (a) Is responsible for the call and conduct of meetings;

33 (b) Shall call and hold meetings of the commission at least
34 quarterly; and

35 (c) Shall call additional meetings upon request by a majority of
36 the commission's voting members.

37 (3) A majority of the voting members of the commission
38 constitutes a quorum of the commission at any meeting and the action

1 of the majority of voting members present is the action of the
2 commission.

3 (4) The department shall provide staff support to the commission.

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** (1) The commission's purpose is to:

5 (a) Collaborate in sharing and analyzing data and information
6 regarding intergenerational poverty in the state with a primary focus
7 on data and information regarding children who are at risk of
8 continuing the cycle of poverty and welfare dependency unless outside
9 intervention is made;

10 (b) Examine and analyze shared data and information regarding
11 intergenerational poverty, including the data provided by the
12 intergenerational poverty report described in section 8 of this act,
13 to identify and develop effective and efficient plans, programs, and
14 recommendations to help at-risk children in the state escape the
15 cycle of poverty and welfare dependency;

16 (c) Implement data-driven policies and programs addressing
17 poverty, public assistance, education, and other areas as needed to
18 measurably reduce the incidence of children in the state who remain
19 in the cycle of poverty and welfare dependency as they become adults;

20 (d) Establish and facilitate improved cooperation between state
21 agencies down to the case worker level in rescuing children from
22 intergenerational poverty and welfare dependency; and

23 (e) Encourage participation and input from the intergenerational
24 poverty advisory committee established in section 7 of this act and
25 other community resources, including academic experts, advocacy
26 groups, nonprofit corporations, local governments, and religious
27 institutions in exploring strategies and solutions to help children
28 in the state who are victims of intergenerational poverty escape the
29 cycle of poverty and welfare dependency.

30 (2) The commission shall:

31 (a) Fulfill the commission's purposes as listed in subsection (1)
32 of this section;

33 (b) Study, evaluate, and report on the status and effectiveness
34 of policies, procedures, and programs that provide services to
35 children in the state affected by intergenerational poverty and
36 welfare dependency;

37 (c) Study and evaluate the policies, procedures, and programs
38 implemented by other states and nongovernmental entities that address

1 the needs of children affected by intergenerational poverty and
2 welfare dependency;

3 (d)(i) Identify policies, procedures, and programs, including any
4 lack of interagency data sharing, lack of policy coordination, or
5 current federal requirements, that are impeding efforts to help
6 children in the state affected by intergenerational poverty escape
7 the poverty cycle and welfare dependency; and

8 (ii) Implement and recommend changes to those policies and
9 procedures;

10 (e) Create an ongoing five and ten-year plan, which is updated
11 annually, containing:

12 (i) Measurable goals and benchmarks, including future action
13 needed to attain those goals and benchmarks, for decreasing the
14 incidence of intergenerational poverty among the state's children and
15 increasing the number of the state's children who escape the poverty
16 cycle and welfare dependency;

17 (ii) Implement policy, procedure, and program changes to address
18 the needs of children affected by intergenerational poverty and help
19 those children escape the poverty cycle and welfare dependency,
20 including, as available over time, data to track the effectiveness of
21 each change; and

22 (iii) Recommend policy, procedure, and program changes to address
23 the needs of children affected by intergenerational poverty and to
24 help those children escape the poverty cycle and welfare dependency,
25 including the steps that will be required to make the recommended
26 changes and whether further action is required by the legislature or
27 the federal government;

28 (f) Ensure that each change and recommended change to a policy,
29 procedure, or program, which is made by the commission, is supported
30 by verifiable data;

31 (g) Protect the privacy of individuals living in poverty by using
32 and distributing the data it collects or examines in compliance with
33 RCW 74.04.060 and other applicable federal and state requirements;
34 and

35 (h) Provide a forum for public comment and participation in
36 efforts to help children in the state escape the cycle of poverty and
37 welfare dependency.

38 (3) To accomplish its duties, the commission may:

1 (a) Request and receive from any state or local governmental
2 agency or institution, information relating to poverty in the state,
3 including:

- 4 (i) Reports;
- 5 (ii) Audits;
- 6 (iii) Data;
- 7 (iv) Projections; and
- 8 (v) Statistics; and

9 (b) Appoint special committees, in addition to the advisory
10 committee described in section 7 of this act, to advise and assist
11 the commission.

12 (4)(a) Members of a special committee described in subsection
13 (3)(b) of this section:

14 (i) Shall be appointed by the commission and may include:

15 (A) Members of the commission; or

16 (B) Individuals from the private or public sector; and

17 (ii) Shall be reimbursed for travel expenses as provided in RCW
18 43.03.050 and 43.03.060.

19 (b) A special committee described in subsection (3)(b) of this
20 section shall report to the commission on the progress of the special
21 committee.

22 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 7.** (1) To assist the commission, there is
23 created the intergenerational poverty advisory committee.

24 (2) The advisory committee shall be composed of no more than
25 eleven members.

26 (3) Members of the advisory committee shall be appointed by the
27 chair of the commission, with the approval of the commission, and
28 shall include at least one member from each of the following groups:

29 (a) Advocacy groups that focus on childhood poverty issues;

30 (b) Advocacy groups that focus on education issues;

31 (c) Academic experts in childhood poverty or education issues;

32 (d) Faith-based organizations that address childhood poverty or
33 education issues; and

34 (e) Local government representatives that address childhood
35 poverty or education issues.

36 (4) Subject to subsection (5) of this section, each member of the
37 advisory committee shall be appointed for a four-year term unless a
38 member is appointed to complete an unexpired term.

1 (5) The commission chair may adjust the length of term at the
2 time of appointment or reappointment so that approximately half of
3 the advisory committee is appointed every two years.

4 (6) The commission chair may remove an advisory committee member:

5 (a) If the member is unable or unwilling to carry out the
6 member's assigned responsibilities; or

7 (b) For good cause.

8 (7) If a vacancy occurs in the advisory committee membership for
9 any reason, a replacement may be appointed for the unexpired term.

10 (8) The commission chair shall select a chair of the advisory
11 committee on an annual basis.

12 (9) A majority of the advisory committee constitutes a quorum of
13 the advisory committee at any meeting and the action of the majority
14 of members present is the action of the advisory committee.

15 (10) The advisory committee shall:

16 (a) Meet at least twice a year at the request of the commission
17 chair or the chair of the advisory committee;

18 (b) Make recommendations to the commission on how the commission
19 and the state can effectively address the needs of children affected
20 by intergenerational poverty and achieve the purposes and duties of
21 the commission as described in section 6 of this act; and

22 (c) Ensure that the advisory committee's recommendations to the
23 commission are supported by verifiable data.

24 (11) The department shall provide staff support to the advisory
25 committee.

26 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 8.** (1) The commission shall provide a report
27 to the governor, the appropriate committees of the legislature, and
28 the WorkFirst legislative executive task force.

29 (2) The report must:

30 (a) Include the five and ten-year plans described in section
31 6(2)(e) of this act;

32 (b) Describe how the commission fulfilled its statutory purposes
33 and duties during the year;

34 (c) Describe policies, procedures, and programs that have been
35 implemented or modified to help break the cycle of poverty and end
36 welfare dependency for children in the state affected by
37 intergenerational poverty; and

38 (d) Contain recommendations on how the state should act to
39 address issues relating to breaking the cycle of poverty and ending

1 welfare dependency for children in the state affected by
2 intergenerational poverty.

3 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 9.** Sections 1 through 8 of this act
4 constitute a new chapter in Title 74 RCW.

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