

# FINAL BILL REPORT

## 2SSB 6478

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Synopsis as Enacted

**Brief Description:** Revising economic assistance programs.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Nguyen, Darneille, Stanford, Saldaña, Dhingra, Das and Hasegawa).

**Senate Committee on Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation**

**Senate Committee on Ways & Means**

**House Committee on Human Services & Early Learning**

**House Committee on Appropriations**

**Background:** Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) was created under the federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. TANF is a federal block grant providing temporary cash assistance, subsidized childcare, and work programs for families. States use TANF block grants to operate their own programs. State programs differ, but operate in accordance with the following purposes set forth in federal law:

- providing assistance to needy families so children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives;
- ending the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage;
- preventing and reducing the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establishing annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies; and
- encouraging the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

Five-Year Time Limit. Federal rules limit the length of time an adult can receive TANF benefits to a cumulative total of 60 months. States can extend TANF assistance beyond the 60-month limit for up to 20 percent of the average monthly caseload. In federal fiscal year 2018, 4.9 percent of the state's caseload was exempt from the 60-month limit. Extensions may only be offered to families on the basis of hardship, as defined by the state, or in instances of family violence. The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) has adopted rules identifying who is eligible for a time-limit hardship extension. Examples of hardship under the adopted rules include a person with severe and chronic disabilities and a person acting as a caregiver for a disabled child or adult, among others. In 2019, homelessness was added as a qualifying hardship for an extension to the 60-month limit. For this purpose, "homeless" is defined as an individual living outside or in a building not meant

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for human habitation or which they have no legal right to occupy, in an emergency shelter, or in a temporary housing program which may include a transitional and supportive housing program if habitation time limits exist.

**Summary:** Five-Year Time Limit. DSHS must exempt TANF recipients from the five-year time limit due to hardship, family violence, or if the recipient meets criteria in current adopted rules. As of July 1, 2021, DSHS must add to exemption rules to include circumstances where the recipient's family includes a child or youth who is without a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence as described in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (Title 42, U.S.C., chapter 119, subpart VI, part B) as it existed on January 1, 2020.

Reporting on Benefit Reductions and Terminations. By December 31st each year, DSHS must report to the Governor and the Legislature disaggregated data identifying the race of individuals whose TANF benefits were reduced or terminated during the preceding year due to sanction or reaching the 60-month limit. If the disaggregated data shows a disproportionate representation of any racial group that has experienced historic disparities, DSHS must describe steps it is taking to address and remedy the disproportionality.

**Votes on Final Passage:**

Senate	30	18	
House	57	40	(House amended) (Senate refused to concur/asked House to recede)
House	56	41	(House receded/amended)
Senate	30	18	(Senate concurred)

**Effective:** June 11, 2020  
July 1, 2021 (Section 1)