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## Housing, Human Services & Veterans Committee

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### HB 1151

**Brief Description:** Bolstering economic recovery.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Leavitt, Shewmake, Peterson, Bronoske, Entenman, Stonier, Bateman, Chopp, Frame, Hackney, Callan, Pollet, Gregerson, Senn and Johnson, J..

#### Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows Consolidated Emergency Assistance to be provided more than once in a 12 month period when directed by the Governor.
- Provides a one-time cash benefit and transitional food assistance to certain qualifying households.
- Requires the Department of Social and Health Services to update the standards of need for cash assistance programs.

**Hearing Date:** 1/19/21

**Staff:** Dawn Eychaner (786-7135).

#### Background:

##### Consolidated Emergency Assistance.

The Consolidated Emergency Assistance Program (CEAP) provides emergency cash assistance to qualifying families with children. The CEAP benefits are limited to one time within any 12-month period and are intended to alleviate emergent conditions resulting from insufficient income and resources to provide for food, shelter, clothing, medical care, and other necessary items and services. Families must meet income requirements and be ineligible for other cash assistance programs in order to receive benefits.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

During a state of emergency and pursuant to an order from the Governor, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) may extend the CEAP to individuals and households without children. In February 2020, Governor Inslee issued Proclamation 20-05, declaring a statewide emergency in response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Subsequent gubernatorial proclamations, including Proclamation 20-63 et. seq., expanded eligibility for CEAP benefits to individuals and families without children. The DSHS created the Disaster Cash Assistance Program (DCAP) to expand the CEAP for this purpose and activated DCAP in April 2020. The DCAP, and therefore expanded eligibility for households without children, ended in January 2021.

#### Cash and Food Assistance.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also referred to as Basic Food, provides food benefits to eligible low-income households. A household is considered categorically eligible for Basic Food when all members of the household receive or are authorized to receive payments or services from certain programs, or the household income is at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines.

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program provides a cash benefit for qualifying low-income households with children. Families receiving TANF are categorically eligible for Basic Food. Most TANF recipients are time-limited to a lifetime maximum of 5 years of benefits. When a household reaches this 5 year time limit, the DSHS provides Transitional Food Assistance (TFA) to the family for 5 months.

#### Standards of Need.

The DSHS has established consolidated standards of need for certain cash assistance programs. The standards represent the amount of income required for a household to maintain a minimum and adequate standard of living. The standards are based on the household's size and include basic requirements for food, clothing, shelter, and other household costs. The standards are based on studies of living costs and are updated annually according to inflation. Cash assistance grant amounts cannot exceed the identified need standard. Current cash grant standards are lower than the standard of need.

The DSHS has the authority to adopt a separate standard for shelter provided at no cost. Prior to September 2020, separate need and payment standards were in place for households with shelter provided at no cost. In September 2020, the DSHS adopted rules repealing references to the separate standards and no longer issues reduced grants based on shelter being provided at no cost.

#### **Summary of Bill:**

##### Consolidated Emergency Assistance.

The CEAP benefits may be provided more than once within a 12-month period if established in an order by the Governor.

Cash and Food Assistance.

Households with children that are receiving food benefits, and are not simultaneously receiving TANF, are eligible to receive a one-time cash benefit in the final month of eligibility when the household's food benefits terminate. Termination may be due to exceeding income limits or if the household voluntarily leaves the program. The amount of the cash benefit is determined by available funds appropriated for this purpose. Households that receive the cash benefit are also eligible to receive five months of TFA.

These provisions are null and void if specific funding for these purposes is not included in the omnibus Appropriations Act by June 30, 2021.

Standards of Need.

By July 1, 2022, the DSHS must use an existing, broadly used national standard and revise the study of living costs that the standards of need for cash assistance are based upon. Cell phone, Internet, and out-of-pocket costs for child care and health care are added to the household budget items that must be included in the study of living costs.

The statutory authority for the DSHS to adopt a separate standard for shelter provided at no cost is removed.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 15, 2021.

**Effective Date:** Section 2 of this act takes effect July 1, 2022.