

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2048

As Reported by House Committee On:
Housing, Human Services & Veterans

Title: An act relating to temporary assistance for needy families time limit extensions.

Brief Description: Concerning temporary assistance for needy families time limit extensions.

Sponsors: Representatives Peterson, Ortiz-Self, Senn, Santos, Ormsby, Bergquist, Macri, Ramel, Simmons, Pollet and Harris-Talley.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Housing, Human Services & Veterans: 2/1/22, 2/3/22 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Creates new time limit extensions for recipients of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING, HUMAN SERVICES & VETERANS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Peterson, Chair; Taylor, Vice Chair; Bateman, Chopp, Donaghy and Leavitt.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Gilday, Ranking Minority Member.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Barkis, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Jacobsen.

Staff: Serena Dolly (786-7150).

Background:

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.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is a federal block grant that provides temporary cash assistance, subsidized childcare, and work programs for low-income families. With limited exceptions, adult TANF recipients must participate in one or more WorkFirst activities that are identified through an assessment and documented in the recipient's Individual Responsibility Plan. These activities may include paid and unpaid employment-based training programs, career development, community service, work skills assessment and job search training, and vocational training programs. The TANF program is administered by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS).

Federal rules limit the length of time an adult can receive TANF benefits to a cumulative total of 60 months. Time limit extensions (TLE) may be offered to families on the basis of hardship, as defined by the state, or in instances of family violence. States can extend federal TANF assistance beyond the 60-month limit for up to 20 percent of the average monthly caseload.

The DSHS has adopted rules identifying who is eligible for a hardship TLE. Examples of hardship under the adopted rules include a person with severe and chronic disabilities, a person acting as a caregiver for a disabled child or adult, and a person experiencing homelessness, among others.

The DSHS has also adopted regulations that apply the 60-month time limit to households in which a parent is in the home and ineligible for TANF.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The DSHS must adopt rules to allow a hardship TLE if the recipient:

- is temporarily prevented from working or looking for a job;
- is in need of mental health or substance use disorder treatment;
- is homeless or at substantial risk of losing stable housing or housing support services;
- or
- demonstrates another basis by which the 60-month time limit would cause undue hardship to the recipient or the recipient's family.

In addition, the DSHS must modify its regulations that impose the 60-month lifetime limit on households with an ineligible parent to apply only to households with a parent who is ineligible due to fraud and disqualifying claims.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill removes the requirement in the original bill that the DSHS allow a TLE if a recipient is participating satisfactorily in the program. The substitute bill adds a provision requiring the DSHS to modify its regulations that impose the 60-month lifetime limit on households with an ineligible parent to apply only to households with a parent who is

ineligible due to fraud and disqualifying claims.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 31, 2022.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill corrects the institutionalized racism imbedded in underlying TANF policy. Many black families are being cut off at disproportionately higher rates than their white counterparts. All families should be able to get help when they need it. The TANF extensions can be a game changer and give families more time to get back on their feet. In 2011 the Legislature drastically restricted access to TLEs, which resulted in a disproportionate amount of black and Indigenous families being cut from the program. These families have been able to access additional time under the COVID-19 extensions. Without action by the Legislature, this protection will expire in just five months, resulting in the reinstatement of a racist policy. Survivors of domestic violence use TANF during the most difficult times of their lives. To qualify for a family violence extension, a survivor must disclose the abuse, and many survivors do not disclose this information for a lot of good reasons. It can take a long time for a survivor to get safe and stable.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) Most families receive TANF for a much shorter period than the 60-month time limit, but some do reach the limit. The federal government allows states to set criteria for extensions for up to 20 percent of recipients, and the DSHS does not anticipate that this bill will result in that limit being exceeded.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Strom Peterson, prime sponsor; Andrea Caupain, Byrd Barr Place; Lianna Kressin, Statewide Poverty Action Network; Shereese Rhodes; and Traci Underwood, Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

(Other) Babs Roberts, Department of Social and Health Services.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.