

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5785

As Passed House:

March 3, 2022

Title: An act relating to transitional food assistance.

Brief Description: Concerning transitional food assistance.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation (originally sponsored by Senators Lovelett, Wilson, C., Das, Dhingra, Hasegawa, Nobles, Saldaña and Stanford; by request of Department of Social and Health Services).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Housing, Human Services & Veterans: 2/22/22, 2/24/22 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/3/22, 96-1.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Directs the Department of Social and Health Services to provide transitional food assistance for five months to a household that ceases to receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and is not in full-family sanction status.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING, HUMAN SERVICES & VETERANS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Peterson, Chair; Taylor, Vice Chair; Gilday, Ranking Minority Member; Barkis, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bateman, Chopp, Donaghy, Jacobsen and Leavitt.

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.

The Basic Food Program is Washington's name for the combination of the federally funded Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the state-funded Food Assistance Program (FAP). The FAP is for individuals who are legal immigrants and meet all eligibility requirements for SNAP except for citizenship and immigration status.

The Transitional Food Assistance (TFA) program provides five months of a fixed food benefit to households who stop receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), provided the household is not in sanction status. Sanction status occurs when a household does not meet WorkFirst program participation requirements, and households in sanction status receive a 40 percent decrease in their TANF grant. A full-family sanction is the termination of a household's TANF after receiving a reduced grant, or sanction, for a certain time period.

In fiscal year 2021, a monthly average of 11,180 households received TFA.

Summary of Bill:

Beginning January 1, 2024, the DSHS must provide TFA for five months to a household that ceases to receive TANF and is not in full-family sanction status. If a member of a household has been sanctioned but the household is still receiving benefits, then remaining eligible household members may receive TFA.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on January 1, 2024.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) People should be able to get help when they need it. The TANF and TFA programs help support families and children who are in severe poverty. Low-income families in the state continue to struggle with hunger. This bill allows children and other family members to receive food benefits even if one adult is sanctioned. WorkFirst requires adults to work as much as 20 hours per week. This can be very difficult for some families, and other assistance programs prohibit an adult from working more than 19 hours per week. The bill reflects changes in federal law and will help ensure children do not have to go without food while their family transitions off TANF.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Liz Lovelett, prime sponsor; Babs Roberts, Department of Social and Health Services, Economic Services Administration; Claire Lane, Anti-Hunger and Nutrition Coalition; and Lianna Kressin, Statewide Poverty Action Network.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.