

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2007

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Human Services, February 20, 2024

Title: An act relating to expanding time limit exemptions applicable to cash assistance programs.

Brief Description: Expanding time limit exemptions applicable to cash assistance programs.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Peterson, Gregerson, Alvarado, Berry, Senn, Morgan, Leavitt, Reed, Ormsby, Kloba, Macri, Doglio, Bergquist, Goodman, Ortiz-Self, Santos and Hackney).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/13/24, 85-11.

Committee Activity: Human Services: 2/19/24, 2/20/24 [DPA-WM, w/oRec].

Brief Summary of Amended Bill

- Expands time limit extensions in the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program to include recipients who are parents or legal guardians to a child under the age of two who lives in the same household.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass as amended and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.
Signed by Senators Wilson, C., Chair; Kauffman, Vice Chair; Frame and Nguyen.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.
Signed by Senators Boehnke, Ranking Member; Warnick and Wilson, J..

Staff: Alison Mendiola (786-7488)

Background: The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program is a

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federally funded program that provides cash assistance to parents or caregivers with children and pregnant individuals to help meet foundational needs. Persons who are caring for a relative's child, are legal guardians, or who are acting in the place of a parent, are also able to apply for TANF benefits on behalf of these children. To be eligible for TANF benefits, a person must meet certain income and resource limits and meet citizenship criteria.

Time Limit Extensions. Federal rules limit the length of time an adult may receive TANF benefits to a cumulative total of 60 months. Time limit extensions 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.

Statute and rules adopted by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) identify certain circumstances in which a person is eligible for a time limit extension, by reason of hardship, including when the recipient is:

- age 55 or older and caring for a relative or child when the recipient is not the parent;
- a disabled adult;
- caring for a disabled adult;
- caring for a disabled child;
- required to apply for social security income or social security disability insurance;
- participating in a family violence service plan;
- involved in a first-time child welfare case;
- employed for 32 hours or more per week of unsubsidized employment;
- receiving benefits pending an administrative law judge decision;
- homeless;
- caring for a homeless child or youth; and
- receiving or was receiving TANF during a period of high unemployment—when the unemployment rate was at 7 percent or higher.

Summary of Bill: The bill as referred to committee not considered.

Summary of Amended Bill: If a TANF recipient is a parent or legal guardian to a child under the age of two who lives in the same household, that recipient is eligible for a TANF time limit extension.

Appropriation: The bill contains a null and void clause requiring specific funding be provided in an omnibus appropriation act.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 8, 2024.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: July 1, 2024.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Bill as Amended by Committee: PRO: TANF is a critical lifeline and the only benefit with a federal lifetime limit. During the Great Recession many cuts were made to exemptions and since then progress has been made adding exemptions back. This ensures that those who need help can get it, although more still needs to be done. This is helpful for families experiencing domestic violence who either don't know about the family violence exemption or don't want or don't feel safe disclosing their situation. Or, the family isn't believed - those who are not believed are disproportionately people of color. If people get turned away, it's another reason to return to the abuser. Adding this exemption increases safety and stability.

OTHER: Increasing time limit exemptions aligns with poverty reduction efforts.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Lianna Kressin, Statewide Poverty Action Network; Em Stone, WA State Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

OTHER: Babs Roberts, DSHS - Economic Services Administration - Community Services Division.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.