

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5480

As of January 25, 2023

Title: An act relating to accelerating stability for people with a work-limiting disability or incapacity.

Brief Description: Accelerating stability for people with a work-limiting disability or incapacity.

Sponsors: Senators Kauffman, Wilson, C., Kuderer, Lovelett, Nguyen and Saldaña; by request of Department of Social and Health Services.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services: 1/25/23.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Eliminates the requirement that recipients of Aged, Blind and Disabled Cash Assistance Program (ABD) repay the ABD benefits received when that person subsequently receives Supplemental Security Income payments for the same period.
- Aligns ABD and Housing and Essential Needs Referral Program (HEN) income limits with other Department of Social and Health Services cash assistance programs.
- Clarifies that the referrals to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation are voluntary for recipients of ABD and HEN.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Staff: Alison Mendiola (786-7488)

Background: Department of Social and Health Services. The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) offers a number of programs including administering a number of

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.

public benefit programs including the Aged, Blind, or Disabled Cash Assistance Program (ABD), determining eligibility for a referral to the Housing and Essential Needs Referral Program (HEN), and assisting those with disabilities find employment through the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), among other things.

Aged, Blind, or Disabled Cash Assistance Program. ABD is a state-funded program that provides cash assistance and a referral to the HEN to eligible low-income individuals who are age 65 or older, blind or determined likely to meet Supplemental Security Income (SSI) disability criteria based on an impairment or impairments expected to last at least 12 consecutive months. This program provides maximum monthly cash grants of \$417 for a single individual, or \$528 for a married couple. ABD recipients are also eligible for assistance applying for SSI benefits.

ABD is available to Washington residents who:

- are age 65 or older, blind, or have a long-term medical condition that is likely to meet federal disability criteria;
- are at least 18 years old, or, if under 18, a member of a married couple;
- meet income and resource requirements; and
- meet citizenship or alien status requirements.

Housing and Essential Needs Referral Program. HEN is a state-funded program that provides access to essential needs items, and potential rental assistance for low-income individuals who are unable to work for at least 90 days due to a physical or mental incapacity, or both. While DSHS determines eligibility for the referral to the HEN program, actual eligibility for rental assistance and essential needs items is determined by the Department of Commerce (Commerce) through a network of homeless and homeless prevention service providers.

HEN may include limited rent and utility assistance, move-in costs, personal health and hygiene items, cleaning supplies, and transportation assistance.

A HEN referral may be available for Washington residents who:

- are unable to work for at least 90 days due to a physical or mental incapacity;
- are at least 18 years old, or, if under 18, legally emancipated or a member of a married couple;
- meet income and resource requirements; and
- meet citizenship or alien status requirements.

A person may receive both HEN and ABD benefits concurrently while they have an application pending for federal SSI benefits. The monetary value of ABD benefits that is subsequently duplicated by the person's receipt of SSI for the same period, those ABD benefits are considered a debt due to the state and must be repaid.

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. As funding allows, DVR provides individualized

vocational rehabilitation counseling and employment services and supports to people with disabilities who want to work but face substantial barriers in finding meaningful and sustained employment. DVR also provides technical assistance and training to businesses regarding the recruiting and hiring of people with disabilities. People receiving ABD and HEN are assessed to determine whether they would likely benefit from a program offered by DVR, the Employment Security Administration is to refer that person to DVR.

Summary of Bill: Changes and clarifications are made to ABD, HEN, and DVR, including:

- the statutory income limit for HEN is removed, and is to be established by DSHS;
- effective October 1, 2023, ABD recipients who subsequently receive SSI benefits for the same period are not required to repay ABD benefits; and
- person receiving both ABD and HEN may be referred to DVR if the person agrees to a referral.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 18, 2023.

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

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill eliminates the requirement that a person who receives both ABD and SSI for the same time period pay back the ABD benefits. Eliminating this requirement promotes economic stability. It shouldn't be called assistance if people are required to pay it back. You can be on ABD for a long time, sometimes years, waiting for a decision on SSI. People rely on the SSI to pay back debt, use the money as a deposit for housing, and catch up on bills. This proposal is part of the Poverty Reduction Workgroup recommendations.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Claudia Kauffman, Prime Sponsor; Tony Bowie, Department of Social and Health Services, Economic Services Administration; Babs Roberts, Department of Social and Health Services, Economic Services Administration; Melanie Smith, Seattle / King County Coalition on Homelessness; Dawnetta Sparks; Justin Miller; Eric Penar; Tracy L'angat; Kathleen Knutsen; Gian Mitchell, Washington Low Income Housing Alliance.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: PRO: Kristina Sawyckyj; Sharon Murfin.