

HOUSE BILL REPORT

E3SSB 6062

As Passed House - Amended:

March 1, 1996

Title: An act relating to making welfare work.

Brief Description: Making welfare work.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Health & Long-Term Care (originally sponsored by Senators Quigley, Moyer, Fairley, Wood, Wojahn and Winsley).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Children & Family Services: 2/15/96, 2/23/96 [DPA];

Appropriations: 2/24/96, 2/26/96 [DPA(APP w/o CFS)s].

Floor Activity:

Passed House - Amended: 3/1/96, 62-35.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Cooke, Chairman; Lambert, Vice Chairman; Stevens, Vice Chairman; Boldt; Buck; Carrell and Sterk.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Tokuda, Ranking Minority Member; Brown, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Dickerson and Patterson.

Staff: David Knutson (786-7146).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended by Committee on Appropriations and without amendment by Committee on Children & Family Services. Signed by 20 members: Representatives Huff, Chairman; Clements, Vice Chairman; Basich; Brumsickle; Carlson; Cooke; Crouse; Dellwo; Dyer; Grant; Hickel; Jacobsen; Lambert; McMorris; Reams; Sehlin; Sheahan; Silver; Smith and Talcott.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives H. Sommers, Ranking Minority Member; Valle, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chappell; Kessler; Linville; Poulsen; Rust and Wolfe.

Staff: Beth Redfield (786-7130).

Background: Lack of focus on the importance of work may be a barrier to exiting public assistance. Some believe that work programs, combined with supportive services such as child care, training, and medical benefits, can help those on welfare achieve independence. Teen parents may be in need of additional attention.

Summary of Bill: The caretaker in a household receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children will be required to sign a contract as a condition for receiving assistance under the program. The caretaker will be eligible to receive a maximum of 24 full monthly benefit payments and an additional 18 partial monthly benefit payments, if all eligibility conditions are met. Persons incapacitated by domestic violence or sexual assault will not be required to sign contracts or be subject to time limits. The Child Care Coordinating Council will develop a proposal to exempt caretakers from time limits if they provide child care for other caretakers. Caretakers are eligible to earn and keep the first \$30 and one-third of the remainder during each month they receive assistance. The monthly benefit payment will not be increased for a caretaker who becomes the biological parent of a child more than 10 months after the effective date of the caretaker's initial contract. The Department of Social and Health Services will contract for all functions of the Jobs Opportunities and Basic Skills training program not specifically prohibited by federal law. The defense of equitable estoppel is not available to applicants for or recipients of public assistance in adjudicative proceedings.

The department will operate an employment child care program for low-income working parents. The department will reduce cash grants to recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children by 9 percent and shift the resulting money to purchase work and employment training and child care for recipients. The value of a motor vehicle an applicant or recipient of Aid to Families with Dependent Children may own is increased from \$1,500 to \$5,000. Recipients may keep an additional \$3,000 in savings accounts and retain their eligibility for Aid to Families with Dependent Children. The Department of Social and Health Services is authorized to promulgate rules to implement the provisions of this legislation. Rules promulgated by the Department of Social and Health Services to implement the provisions of this act will be submitted to the Legislature prior to their adoption. There is no individual entitlement for public assistance.

A housing assistance program is added for incapacitated persons, persons caring for incapacitated persons, and households receiving child-only grants.

A process is established to suspend various professional, occupational, and driver's licenses for individuals who fail to comply with child support orders or visitation orders.

A referendum clause is provided for the provisions of the act.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed. However, the bill is null and void if not funded in the budget.

Testimony For: (Children & Family Services) Public assistance should not be an entitlement. Work should be a more attractive alternative than welfare.

(Appropriations) None.

Testimony Against: (Children & Family Services) Time limits should not be applied to recipients of public assistance. Monthly benefit payments should not be reduced by 9 percent. Current welfare programs should be allowed to work without changes.

(Appropriations) None.

Testified: (Children & Family Services) (Pro) Mary Hunt, Washington State Grange; Michelle Delo, Washington Families; (With Concerns) Laurie Lippold, Children's Home Society; Doug Danley; Dan Comsia, Lutheran Public Policy Office; Jerry W. Friedman, Department of Social and Health Services; Richard Rhine, Organization for Family Advocacy and Support; (Con) Kathleen Russell, Washington Association of Churches; Ned Dolesji, Washington State Catholic Conference; Richard Warner, Citizens Commission on Human Rights; Arla Bobillit, Headstart parent and welfare recipient; June Banahan, Gwen Orwiler and Dori Cordova, Fair Budget Action Campaign.

(Appropriations) None.