

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2083

As Reported By House Committee On:

Appropriations

Title: An act relating to public assistance.

Brief Description: Limiting general assistance for certain categories of recipients.

Sponsors: Representatives Silver and Cooke.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Appropriations: 3/21/95, 3/22/95 [DP].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 21 members: Representatives Silver, Chairman; Clements, Vice Chairman; Huff, Vice Chairman; Pelesky, Vice Chairman; Beeksma; Brumsickle; Carlson; Chappell; Cooke; Crouse; Foreman; Grant; Hargrove; Hickel; Lambert; Lisk; McMorris; Reams; Sehlin; Sheahan and Talcott.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Sommers, Ranking Minority Member; Valle, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Basich; Dellwo; G. Fisher; Jacobsen; Poulsen; Rust; Thibaudeau and Wolfe.

Staff: Beth Redfield (786-7130).

Background: The General Assistance program is a fully state funded cash assistance program for the unemployable and for women in their first two trimesters of pregnancy who would otherwise be eligible for Aid to Families with Dependent Children. The current payment standard for one person is \$339 per month. Recipients are also provided medical benefits which are state-only funded. There is no time limit on the receipt of General Assistance-Unemployable (GA-U).

Current law specifies that unemployable recipients must be incapacitated from gainful employment by reason of bodily or mental infirmity that will likely continue for a minimum of 90 days. In practice, eligibility for GA-U is determined by using a decision-making process known as the progressive evaluation process. If a medical condition alone is insufficient to determine eligibility, then vocational factors are

considered. Vocational factors include work history, age, and ability to speak English.

Summary of Bill: GA-U is time limited to 12 months in a 36 month period. Vocational factors shall no longer be considered in determining eligibility.

General Assistance for pregnant women is limited to women 18 years of age or older who are incapacitated from gainful employment by a pregnancy-related condition.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on March 20, 1995.

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

Testimony For: None.

Testimony Against: Incapacity does not end at 12 months. This bill will result in unfunded mandates for local governments who will see increased burdens on law enforcement, homeless shelters, and food banks. Pregnant women will not access medical care even though they are still eligible, because they won't know about services without contact with the General Assistance program. Twelve months is not sufficient time for SSI application. Developmentally disabled people and other SSI eligible people will be cut off from cash and medical benefits between the end of general assistance and the beginning of SSI.

Testified: Laurie Evans, Department of Social and Health Services; and Mary Jo Wilcox, Washington Assembly.