

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2589

As Reported By House Committee On:
Children & Family Services

Title: An act relating to eligibility for temporary assistance for needy families.

Brief Description: Requiring disclosure of the names of both parents of children as a condition of eligibility for temporary assistance for needy families.

Sponsors: Representatives Boldt, Cooke, McDonald, Bush, Clements and Schoesler.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Children & Family Services: 1/27/98, 1/30/98 [DPS].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Cooke, Chairman; Boldt, Vice Chairman; Bush, Vice Chairman; Tokuda, Ranking Minority Member; Kastama, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Ballasiotes; Carrell; Dickerson; Gombosky; McDonald and Wolfe.

Staff: Douglas Ruth (786-7134).

Background: Recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) are required to name the parent of their minor children when applying for assistance unless they qualify for a good cause exemption.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families are required to make a good faith effort to identify the parent of their minor children, subject to good cause. The recipient has good cause not to identify the parent if revealing the name would be detrimental to the child and would result in serious physical or emotional harm to either the child or to the caretaker such that his or her ability to care for the child would be reduced, or if the child was conceived as a result of incest or forcible rape. The TANF recipient must corroborate his or her assertion of a good cause exception with law enforcement, child protective services, social services, birth, or medical records.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute bill adds good cause exceptions to the requirement that the TANF recipient name the parent of their child. The recipient must act in good faith to identify the parent.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: Requiring that a TANF recipient name the other parent allows the child support division within the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to recover child support for the recipient. This offsets the cost of public assistance and promotes self-sufficiency.

Testimony Against: Adding good cause exceptions is vital. Although collecting child support from responsible parents is important, the paramount goal must be the safety of the other parent. There are reasons why it may not be in the best interest of the parent, or the child, to name the absent parent. The identified party may take revenge on the other parent when the child support division contacts him or her. Current administrative rules creating good cause exceptions to the similar requirement that TANF recipients cooperate with the child support division should be used.

Testified: Bill Harrington, American Fathers Alliance (pro); Judy Turpin, Northwest Women's Law Center (con); and Elizabeth Morgan, Department of Social and Health Services Division of Child Support (concerns).