

FINAL BILL REPORT

ESHB 2900

C 88 L 98

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Providing for pro rata calculation of temporary assistance for needy families grants.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Children & Family Services (originally sponsored by Representatives Cooke, Ballasiotes, McDonald, Boldt and Mitchell).

House Committee on Children & Family Services

House Committee on Appropriations

Senate Committee on Health & Long-Term Care

Background: In the 1997 session, the Legislature created the WorkFirst program. The program is intended to assist of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) grant recipients to move from public assistance to unsubsidized employment. In conformity with the federal law that created the TANF block grant, participants in the program are required to perform work activities as a condition of receiving assistance. A specified number of hours of work must be completed by each recipient each month.

If a recipient refuses to perform the required hours of work in a month, the department may impose a sanction. The penalty for failing to meet the work requirement is reduction of the family's grant by the recipient's share in the first instance, reduction of the grant and assignment of a protective payee in the second instance, and a 40 percent reduction in the third instance. The department also has the option to terminate the grant altogether. These sanctions are subject to good cause exceptions.

The federal law also permits the states to use a "pro rata" sanction. This sanction reduces the recipient's grant by the percentage of the work requirement he or she did not fulfill during the month.

Summary: The Department of Social and Health Services is required to study the adoption of a pro rata method for calculating TANF grants. The study must consider the feasibility of adopting the pro rata method, the fiscal impact of such an adoption, appropriate good cause exceptions, rules for preventing abuse of the good cause exceptions, and recommendations for alternative calculation methods. The department will report its findings to the appropriate committees of the House of Representatives and Senate by November 30, 1998.

Votes on Final Passage:

House 95 1

Senate 47 0

Effective: June 11, 1998