

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6331

As of January 23, 1998

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

Brief Description: Changing teen parent eligibility for temporary assistance for needy families.

Sponsors: Senators Hargrove, Long, Fairley, Stevens and Oke.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 1/27/98.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Staff: Joanne Conrad (786-7472)

Background: For many years, there has been recurrent legislative concern regarding the need for "appropriate living situations" for minor teen parents on welfare. Although parents under 18 represent a small percentage of the overall welfare caseload, studies show they experience special challenges and problems.

In 1996, the federal government enacted the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act ("welfare reform"), and gave states the legal ability to choose to deny grant assistance to minor teen parents. Washington State, in 1997, enacted a "welfare reform" measure that does allow minor teen parents to receive grant assistance, but conditions the assistance upon the teen parent living in an "appropriate living situation," as determined by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). "Appropriate living situations" include living with parents, legal guardians, adult relatives, or licensed group home. Parents are provided a statutory right to explain why their home may be the most appropriate living situation, but teens are consulted and are not required to stay in abusive situations.

Summary of Bill: Legislative findings regarding the difficulties of minor teen parents and their children are stated. Legislative intent to condition grant assistance upon minor teen parents living in a DSHS-approved living situation, requiring adult supervision, is stated.

Grant assistance ("welfare") is not provided to minor teen parents or their children (by a "child-only" grant), if the teen does not reside in the "most appropriate living situation," as determined by DSHS.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested.

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