

SENATE BILL REPORT

E2SHB 1481

As of March 16, 1995

Title: An act relating to public assistance, including a requirement that caretakers under the aid to families with dependent children program enter into contracts with the state and including additional provisions governing public assistance eligibility and benefits.

Brief Description: Requiring AFDC contracts and making additional changes in public assistance laws.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Cooke, Lambert, Mielke, Van Luvan, Elliot, Schoesler, D. Schmidt, Sherstad, Huff, Buck, Clements, McMorris, Johnson, Blanton, Hickel, Boldt, Backlund, Mulliken, Robertson, Goldsmith, L. Thomas, McMahan, Talcott, Cairnes, Thompson, Beeksma, Benton, Foreman, Sehlin, Sheahan and Mitchell).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 3/16/95, 3/17/95.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Staff: Joanne Conrad (786-7472)

Background: After 30 years and trillions of dollars spent in a nationwide "War on Poverty," caseloads remain high and many persons find themselves unable to permanently exit public assistance. Many poor children grow up to enter a lifetime cycle of poverty. Social costs continue to escalate due to conditions of poverty, especially in single parent homes.

Many recipients, policymakers and taxpayers express frustration with welfare in its current form, and the federal government is now encouraging states to become "laboratories" of welfare reform. New approaches are being designed throughout the country.

Summary of Bill: The temporary nature of welfare, and the importance of employment and personal responsibility are emphasized. "Caretakers" in welfare households are required to contract with the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) regarding benefits, referrals to services, and recipient responsibilities, such as education.

The contracts explain that there cannot be additional grant money for additional children born while on assistance, and that welfare for nonexempt persons is time-limited to 24 months out of 60. Exceptions are made in cases of incapacity, and in homes where there is a child under three years of age, or under special circumstances, when an additional six months may be allowed.

Unmarried parents under 18 cannot receive assistance. Grandparents are legally obligated to support grandchildren until the minor parent of the grandchild reaches 18.

The department is in charge of a mandatory Job Opportunities and Basic Skills program, and contracts with public and private entities for employment and training, which must be "oriented towards local labor force needs."

A Joint Oversight Committee, which comprises the Senate Health and Long-Term Care Committee and the House Children and Family Services Committee, reviews DSHS rule promulgation. The Legislative Budget Committee is in charge of a major evaluation of the effect of the program changes caused by this legislation.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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