

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6769

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Ways & Means, February 21, 1996

Title: An act relating to eligibility for general assistance.

Brief Description: Limiting eligibility for general assistance.

Sponsors: Senators Rinehart, West and Winsley.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Ways & Means: 2/20/96, 2/21/96 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6769 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Rinehart, Chair; Loveland, Vice Chair; Bauer, Cantu, Fraser, Hochstatter, Johnson, Kohl, Long, Moyer, Roach, Sheldon, Snyder, Spanel, Strannigan and Winsley.

Staff: Susan Lucas (786-7711)

Background: The General Assistance-Unemployable program (GAU) provides cash assistance and limited medical services for individuals who are disabled for more than 90 days by a physical or mental impairment. Recipients who are permanently and totally disabled are referred to a caseworker who assists them in obtaining federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits under a program of SSI facilitation. Recipients must show a clear improvement in their disabling condition in order to be removed from the GAU caseload. The program is administered by the Department of Social and Health Services, Economic Services Administration.

In the 1995 Omnibus Appropriations Act (ESHB 1410), the 1995-97 budget for the GAU program was reduced and the Legislature directed that a study of the General Assistance-Unemployable program be performed to identify eligibility changes which would achieve the savings in the budget and to address potential effects of the reduction in program expenditures. The study was intended to explore options to provide training and support services to recipients in order to enable them to become employable.

Results of the study indicate that the GAU program operates without clear statutory goals for recipients. Evaluation and eligibility determination using a disability management model may indicate which recipients would be best served by training and support services intended to promote employability.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The two central goals for the GAU program are to facilitate entry into the SSI program for permanently and totally disabled recipients and to provide

services and training to partially and temporarily disabled recipients to enable them to achieve employability and long-term self sufficiency.

The Department of Social and Health Services is directed to develop an eligibility and evaluation process based on the principles of disability management. The model is implemented in two pilot sites with different characteristics. Outcomes of the pilot implementation of the model are measured to assess the effectiveness of the model. A report on the new model must be submitted to the Legislature no later than December 1, 1996. A report of the results of the pilot implementation must be submitted to the Legislature by November 1, 1997.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original: The original bill was not considered.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: Language regarding the medical only provision should be clarified to ensure that the provision is voluntary. The report on outcomes of the pilot process should be extended to give sufficient time for collection of outcome data.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Ned Doleji, Washington State Catholic Conference; Jackie Der, Harborview Medical Center; Mark McDermott, Department of Social and Health Services.