

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1603

As Passed House:
March 3, 2017

Title: An act relating to updating the child support economic table based on recommendations of the child support work group.

Brief Description: Updating the child support economic table based on recommendations of the child support work group.

Sponsors: Representatives Kilduff, Sawyer, Goodman, McBride and Frame.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Judiciary: 2/1/17, 2/9/17 [DP];

Appropriations: 2/20/17, 2/22/17 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/3/17, 96-1.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Adopts a new economic table for use in establishing child support obligations.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Jinkins, Chair; Kilduff, Vice Chair; Rodne, Ranking Minority Member; Muri, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Frame, Goodman, Graves, Haler, Hansen, Kirby, Klippert, Orwall and Shea.

Staff: Edie Adams (786-7180).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 27 members: Representatives Ormsby, Chair; Robinson, Vice Chair; MacEwen, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Stokesbary, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Caldier, Cody, Fitzgibbon, Hansen, Harris, Hudgins, Jinkins, Kagi, Lytton, Manweller, Nealey, Pettigrew, Pollet, Sawyer, Senn, Springer, Stanford, Sullivan, Tharinger, Vick, Volz and Wilcox.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Chandler, Ranking Minority Member; Buys, Condotta, Haler, Schmick and Taylor.

Staff: Kelci Karl-Robinson (786-7116).

Background:

Child support obligations are established in the context of dissolution or parentage proceedings through the court or an administrative process with the Division of Child Support. The amount of child support is determined using the statutory child support schedule, which includes an economic table and the child support worksheets developed by the Administrative Office of the Courts.

The economic table is used to establish the basic support obligation for each parent, which can then be modified based on statutorily established adjustments and deviations. The basic support obligation is based on the combined monthly net income of the parents, the number of children before the court, and the ages of those children. The economic table has different amounts, in each income bracket, for children up to age 11 and children ages 12 to 18. Each parent's share of the basic support obligation is determined by the parent's proportionate share of the combined monthly net income. After determining the basic support obligation based on the economic table, the judge considers any adjustments to the basic support obligation, such as medical support, day care, and other special expenses, which results in a presumptive amount of child support called the "standard calculation." The judge then has discretion to consider reasons to deviate from the standard calculation.

Every four years, the Division of Child Support must convene a workgroup to review the state's child support laws. This process was established by the Legislature to comply with federal requirements that states conduct quadrennial reviews of their child support laws. The final report of the 2011 Child Support Workgroup (2011 Workgroup) recommended adoption of a new child support economic table that is based on more current data developed by an economist at the request of the 2011 Workgroup. The 2015 Child Support Workgroup also recommended adoption of the new economic table recommended by the 2011 Workgroup.

Summary of Bill:

The child support economic table developed for, and recommended by, the 2011 Child Support Workgroup is adopted. Under the new economic table, the basic support obligation is based on the combined monthly net income of the parents and the number of children before the court. The new economic table no longer provides different basic support obligation amounts depending on the age of the children.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on October 1, 2017.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Judiciary):

(In support) The bill just covers one thing - an update and modernization of the economic table. The update to the table is woefully past due. The current economic table is rooted in a former era and is based on data that dates back to 1987. The 2011 Child Support Workgroup found that nobody can tell you the data or basis for the current economic table. The economic table has not had a significant update since its original adoption. All of the amendments to the economic table have been around the edges. The bill inserts into statute the recommendations of the 2011 Child Support Workgroup which were also endorsed by the 2015 Child Support Workgroup. This is not a radical overhaul. The new table was developed by an economics professor and is rooted in sound process and sound policy. The economic table affects hundreds of thousands of children in the state. Updating the table will take a step forward in ensuring equity for all children and families in the state.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) There are hundreds of *pro se* parents that try to handle child support petitions on their own. Simplification of the table by combining the age groups will make it easier for those folks who are seeking to either establish or modify child support obligations. The modernized table takes into account expenses not considered in the current economic table.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Appropriations):

(In support) The bill would update and modernize the child support economic table, which is based on data dating back to 1987. The bill includes recommendations from the Child Support Workgroup convened in 2011, which were also endorsed by the 2015 Workgroup. Child support is an issue that affects hundreds of thousands of children in the state. This is an important step to ensuring child support obligations are based on more current economic data. A similar version of the bill has passed the House of Representatives four times.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying (Judiciary): (In support) Representative Kilduff, prime sponsor; and David Ward, Legal Voice.

(Other) Wally McClure, Department of Social and Health Services.

Persons Testifying (Appropriations): Nancy Sapiro, Legal Voice.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Judiciary): None.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Appropriations): None.