

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## ESSB 5898

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As of Second Reading

**Title:** An act relating to eligibility for public assistance programs.

**Brief Description:** Concerning eligibility for public assistance programs.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senator Braun).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

None.

**Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill**

- Allows a Temporary Assistance for Needy Families recipient who is the parent of a child under the age of two years to claim an exemption from WorkFirst work participation requirements.

**Staff:** Dawn Eychaner (786-7135).

**Background:**

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is a federal block grant that provides temporary cash assistance, subsidized childcare, and work programs for families. WorkFirst is a component of Washington's TANF program. With limited exceptions, no TANF recipient can receive benefits for more than 60 months in his or her lifetime.

Upon entering the WorkFirst program a recipient receives an assessment examining factors that may impact that individual's ability to obtain employment. Based on the assessment, an Individual Responsibility Plan (IRP) is prepared. The IRP establishes employment goals, describes services available to the recipient to help secure employment, and includes the recipient's requirements for work activities.

Unless a recipient is exempted for good cause, he or she must participate in one or more work activities as a condition of program eligibility. Work activities may include employment, self-employment, job search, training programs, educational activities, or other

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activities identified in the IRP. If a recipient does not comply with required activities, assistance may be reduced or terminated.

A parent of an infant under one year of age may claim a good cause exemption from work activity requirements. This "infant exemption" is limited to a maximum of 12 months over the parent's lifetime. A parent claiming the exemption may be required to participate in mental health treatment, chemical dependency treatment, domestic violence services, or parenting education or skills training.

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**Summary of Bill:**

WorkFirst recipients with a child under the age of two years may claim a good cause exemption from work activity requirements. The lifetime maximum for which a parent may claim the exemption is increased from 12 months to 24 months. Associated requirements for an individual responsibility plan and penalties for non-compliance with WorkFirst program requirements are suspended.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) None.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** None.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.