

HOUSE BILL REPORT

2SSB 5493

As Reported by House Committee On:
Human Services & Early Learning

Title: An act relating to convening local communities to reduce intergenerational poverty.

Brief Description: Concerning convening local communities to reduce intergenerational poverty.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation (originally sponsored by Senators Zeiger, Darneille and Walsh).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Human Services & Early Learning: 2/25/20, 2/26/20 [DPA].

**Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill
(As Amended by Committee)**

- Directs the Department of Social and Health Services to ensure the establishment of local service area advisory and partnership boards.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & EARLY LEARNING

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Senn, Chair; Callan, Vice Chair; Frame, Vice Chair; Goodman, Kilduff, Lovick and Ortiz-Self.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Dent, Ranking Minority Member; Eslick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; McCaslin, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Klippert.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Corry and Griffey.

Staff: Dawn Eychaner (786-7135).

Background:

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.

WorkFirst.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is a federal block grant that provides temporary cash assistance, subsidized childcare, and work programs for families. The Washington WorkFirst TANF Act of 1997 created the WorkFirst program. With limited exceptions, adult TANF recipients must participate in one or more WorkFirst activities such as employment-based training programs, career development, community service, work skills assessment and job search training, and vocational training programs.

WorkFirst Local Planning Areas.

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) has established WorkFirst service areas that plan WorkFirst programs and distribute WorkFirst resources. There are 26 Local Planning Area (LPA) partnerships for the WorkFirst program that coordinate and plan for WorkFirst program implementation and local poverty reduction efforts. The LPA partnerships include representation from community nonprofit organizations, tribes, higher education institutions, and state and local government.

Every two years, each DSHS region must develop a WorkFirst program plan. The plan must be prepared with local and regional sources. Regional area program implementation may deviate from the statewide program if specified in a service area plan.

Other.

The DSHS operates 54 Community Services Offices (CSOs) that provide public assistance such as TANF, food assistance, and subsidized child care referrals to qualified individuals and households in the community.

In 2018 the Legislative-Executive WorkFirst Poverty Reduction Oversight Task Force (Task Force) was directed to expand its scope beyond monitoring the delivery of the WorkFirst program to include a broader focus on intergenerational poverty and poverty reduction.

Summary of Amended Bill:

The DSHS must ensure that local service area advisory and partnership boards (boards) are established and the DSHS must provide staffing assistance to the boards. The boards must meet at least quarterly and:

- promote effective communication and collaboration among the CSOs, local governments, community action agencies, and other service providers;
- advise and comment on program policies;
- work to resolve local issues including client referral and service gaps;
- review local data and racial disproportionality trends;
- review public assistance client feedback;
- propose innovative and evidence-based collaborative services; and
- provide input for the plans required to be developed for each local service area.

The DSHS CSOs must collaborate with community partners through the boards to develop effective work and work preparation programs.

The "WorkFirst service areas" are renamed "service areas" and are charged with planning programs, distributing resources, and fostering local collaborations with community partners to reduce chronic intergenerational poverty.

The plan required every two years from each DSHS region for the WorkFirst program is changed to a plan from each service area for local collaboration that must be developed every two years.

Amended Bill Compared to Second Substitute Bill:

The amended bill:

- adds an intent for statewide poverty reduction programs to reflect the diversity of local communities;
- states that success in reducing poverty includes reducing the disproportionate impact of chronic and intergenerational poverty on groups that have experienced historic disparities or discrimination;
- adds community action agencies as entities with whom the boards must collaborate;
- requires the boards to review trends in racial disproportionality in local data; and
- strikes the term "welfare-to-work" and adds employment and training as services for which the DSHS may develop statewide contracts.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 11, 2020.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) While there are efforts at local collaboration, there are also many activities that occur in silos. A few years ago the Legislature began discussions to refocus poverty reduction efforts to disrupt the cycle of poverty between generations in families. The Task Force and the parallel Poverty Reduction Work Group (PRWG), started by the Governor, have encouraged collaboration and discussion between agencies at the state level; however, the state can do a better job of encouraging collaboration at the local level. The DSHS has LPAs now, and this expanded model will encourage more innovation and inclusion at the local level that can be accomplished within existing resources. Community action agencies are important partners in the fight to reduce poverty. Local networks are needed to identify local needs, and this is aligned with the themes of the Governor's PRWG. This bill expands the mission of the LPAs beyond delivering the TANF and WorkFirst programs to focus more on local and regional coordination in poverty reduction efforts. Expanding upon and leveraging the existing LPA structure is a sound strategy without adding to administrative burdens. Some LPAs are already undertaking these activities, and this bill supports those innovative practices.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Zeiger, prime sponsor; Jeff DeLuca, Washington State Community Action Partnership; and Babette Roberts, Department of Social and Health Services.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.