
Human Services & Early Learning Committee

2SSB 6478

Brief Description: Revising economic assistance programs.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Nguyen, Darneille, Stanford, Saldaña, Dhingra, Das and Hasegawa).

Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill

- Requires the Department of Social and Health Services to reduce a family's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families cash grant after two months, and terminate the grant after 12 months, of continuous noncompliance with work activity requirements.

Hearing Date: 2/25/20

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 low-income families. With limited exceptions, adult TANF recipients must participate in one or more WorkFirst activities that are identified through an assessment and documented in the recipient's Individual Responsibility Plan (IRP). These activities may include paid and unpaid employment-based training programs, career development, community service, work skills assessment and job search training, and vocational training programs.

The TANF program is administered by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS).

Work Participation and Sanctions.

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.

Federal law and state rules require a reduction or termination of a family's TANF benefits if an individual in the family refuses to participate in work requirements, unless the individual meets criteria to be exempt from mandatory work participation or has good cause. This reduction of assistance is referred to as "noncompliance sanction."

A family's TANF grant is reduced by one person's share or 40 percent, whichever is more, when a recipient is in noncompliance sanction. After two months in noncompliance sanction, the grant is terminated.

The DSHS may waive sanction policies if the recipient refuses to participate in work for good cause. Examples of good cause reasons for failure to participate include when the recipient is a parent or other relative personally caring for a child under age 6 and appropriate care necessary for the recipient to participate is not available or when the recipient is a parent of a child under age 2.

Summary of Bill:

If a recipient refuses to engage in work activities, the DSHS must review the case to ensure the DSHS has considered any barriers to work and made any necessary revisions to the recipient's IRP. After two months of continuous noncompliance, the family's grant must be reduced by the recipient's share or 40 percent, whichever is greater. After 12 months of continuous noncompliance, the DSHS must terminate the grant. The DSHS is required to waive sanction policies for recipients who refuse to engage in work for good cause.

The act applies prospectively only and not retroactively. If specific funding for the act is not provided in the 2020 Supplemental Omnibus Appropriations Act by June 30, 2020, the act is null and void.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on May 1, 2021. However, the bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.