

SENATE BILL REPORT

2SSB 5493

As Passed Senate, February 17, 2020

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, Reentry & Rehabilitation: 2/05/19, 2/12/19 [DPS-WM]; 1/28/20, 1/30/20 [DP2S].

Floor Activity:

Passed Senate: 2/17/20, 46-2.

Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill

- Directs the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to ensure that local service area advisory and partnership boards are established and that DSHS provides staffing assistance.
- Establishes the goal of local collaborations with community partners is to reduce chronic intergenerational poverty in communities.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, REENTRY & REHABILITATION

Majority Report: That Second Substitute Senate Bill No. 5493 be substituted therefor, and the second substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Darneille, Chair; Nguyen, Vice Chair; Walsh, Ranking Member; Cleveland, O'Ban, Wilson, C. and Zeiger.

Staff: Alison Mendiola (786-7488)

Background: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is a federal block grant providing temporary cash assistance, subsidized childcare, and work programs for families. The Washington WorkFirst Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Act of 1997 created the WorkFirst program. WorkFirst is administered by DSHS.

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.

When WorkFirst was created, the Legislature found that moving those eligible for assistance to self-sustaining employment is a goal of the WorkFirst program.

DSHS was directed through its regional offices to collaborate with employers, recipients, frontline workers, employment and training agencies, local governments, the employment security department, community action agencies, and others to develop work programs that are effective in their communities.

By July 31st of each odd-numbered year, a plan for the WorkFirst program is developed for each DSHS region. The plan is prepared in consultation with local and regional sources, adapting the statewide WorkFirst program to achieve maximum effect for the participants and the communities within which they reside.

In 2011, the Legislature created the Legislative-Executive WorkFirst Oversight Task Force (Task Force) to oversee a redesign of the WorkFirst program and the operation of TANF.

In 2017, the Task Force was renamed as the Legislative-Executive WorkFirst Poverty Reduction Oversight Task Force and was tasked with the following goals: reducing the overall percentage of people living below 200 percent of the federal poverty level by 50 percent by the year 2025; and preventing and addressing adverse childhood experiences and the trauma of children living in poverty.

Summary of Second Substitute Bill: The Legislature finds that moving those living in poverty to self-sustaining employment is a goal of public assistance programs and state poverty reduction efforts.

DSHS is to ensure local service area advisory and partnership boards are established and to provide staffing assistance to them. The local service area advisory and partnership boards must meet at least quarterly and:

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

By July 31st of each odd-numbered year, a plan for local collaboration must be developed for each local service area. The plan must be prepared in consultation with local and regional sources, adapting the statewide services to achieve maximum effect for the participants and the communities within which they reside.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill (Regular Session 2019): *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: CSOs provide great service and are an integral part of the state's strategy to reduce poverty. They have valuable connections and relationships with the community, but there is room for additional collaboration which is the idea behind having a Board of Advisors at all CSOs. We live in a network society, people want to be involved with government, and in government we need new ways to receive input. The Board of Advisors is a vehicle for feedback. Support of strategies to implement this idea while reducing the cost; such as three regional administrator meetings per year, instead of 12.

OTHER: The Community Services Division of the Economic Services Administration of DSHS, recognize the need to engage at the local level. Some people show up at CSOs for services the CSOs do not provide and they would like to do better. Community Services Division is working to transform the case management structure to make a broader community connection, and to better serve clients. CSOs are nationally recognized for their delivery of public assistance benefits; they are decreasing processing and wait times. There is a concern about how to manage input from local boards which could impact the statewide model. At the local level there are 27 local planning agencies (LPAs), which serves as a forum for delivery of services, although there is more of a WorkFirst focus. LPAs meet regularly, about six times a year, look at programs, and develop strategy plans. Local partners stay informed about policy this way. Many local planning agencies will develop pilots. In Snohomish, there is an expanded LPA with a partnership beyond WorkFirst/TANF, to human services providers who work with low-income individuals, local and state government representatives, local business, legal advocates, and health care. There are only three regions in ESD so it would take all of their time to prepare and participate in monthly board of advisor meetings in each of the local 54 CSOs.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Hans Zeiger, Prime Sponsor.

OTHER: Babette Roberts, DSHS, Community Services Division, Economic Services Administration.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Proposed Second Substitute (Regular Session 2020): PRO: There is good thinking going on state level, such as through the Legislative-Executive WorkFirst Poverty Reduction Oversight Task Force about reducing poverty. We should perfect this model at the local level, utilizing local planning areas working collaboratively on poverty reduction. Right now the primary focus of local planning areas is TANF/WorkFirst, under this bill that focus will shift to intergenerational poverty, which allows for a broader collaboration. This will bring the voices of those most impacted by poverty to the work, as well as labor and others not traditionally at the table.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Hans Zeiger, Prime Sponsor; Babs Roberts, DSHS, Community Services Division, Economic Services Administration.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.