

FINAL BILL REPORT

HB 1755

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Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Concerning temporary assistance for needy families time limit extensions during times of high unemployment.

Sponsors: Representatives Peterson, Leavitt, Bateman, Davis, Gregerson, Wylie, Sullivan, Simmons, Slatter, Bergquist, Pollet, Riccelli, Ormsby and Kloba; by request of Department of Social and Health Services.

House Committee on Housing, Human Services & Veterans

House Committee on Appropriations

Senate Committee on Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation

Background:

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

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. 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).

Five-Year Time Limit.

Federal rules limit the length of time an adult may receive TANF benefits to a cumulative total of five years. Time limit extensions (TLE) may be offered to families on the basis of hardship, as defined by the state, or in instances of family violence. States may extend federal TANF assistance beyond the five-year limit for up to 20 percent of the average monthly caseload.

The DSHS has adopted rules identifying who is eligible for a hardship TLE. Examples of

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hardship under the adopted rules include a person with severe and chronic disabilities, a person acting as a caregiver for a disabled child or adult, and a person experiencing homelessness.

COVID-19 Policy Changes.

The DSHS adopted emergency rules to expand the TLE criteria to apply to families experiencing hardships during the COVID-19 public health emergency. Between April 1, 2020, and June 30, 2022, any resident of Washington who reaches or has reached the five-year limit is eligible for a hardship TLE.

A recipient may receive a hardship TLE equal to the number of months that the recipient received TANF during a month after March 2020 in which the unemployment rate was higher than 7 percent. The extension must be equal to the number of months that the recipient received TANF and the required unemployment rate was met, and must be applied sequentially to any other hardship extension that may apply.

Summary:

Beginning July 1, 2022, the DSHS must approve a hardship TLE when the state unemployment rate most recently published by the Employment Security Department (ESD) is 7 percent or higher. The DSHS may adopt rules specifying which published ESD rates to use for hardship TLEs based on the unemployment rate.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	79	19
Senate	42	7

Effective: June 9, 2022