

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2498

As Passed House:

February 12, 2004

Title: An act relating to funding constraints affecting the Washington WorkFirst program.

Brief Description: Revising funding constraints affecting the Washington WorkFirst program.

Sponsors: By Representative Boldt.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Children & Family Services: 1/26/04, 1/29/04 [DP];

Appropriations: 2/5/04, 2/6/04 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/12/04, 96-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Limits the authority of the Department of Social and Health Services to expend WorkFirst program funding to approval of the Legislature in the biennial appropriations act.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Darneille, Vice Chair; Boldt, Ranking Minority Member; Roach, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bailey, Dickerson, Miloscia, Pettigrew and Shabro.

Staff: Cynthia Forland (786-7152).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 26 members: Representatives Sommers, Chair; Fromhold, Vice Chair; Sehlin, Ranking Minority Member; Pearson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Alexander, Anderson, Boldt, Buck, Chandler, Clements, Cody, Conway, Cox, Dunshee, Grant, Hunter, Kagi, Kenney, Kessler, Linville, McDonald, McIntire, Miloscia, Schual-Berke, Sump and Talcott.

Staff: Amy Skei (786-7140).

Background:

In 1996, the federal government enacted welfare reform. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 shifted the emphasis of the federal program to a "Work First" approach. In 1997, Washington enacted its version of welfare reform, establishing the WorkFirst program.

The WorkFirst program is funded by the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant and state Maintenance of Effort (MOE) funding. The Legislature is required to appropriate this funding for the WorkFirst program to the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) each year in the biennial appropriations act. The DSHS may expend those funds in any manner that effectively accomplishes the outcome measures for the WorkFirst program defined by state law.

Summary of Bill:

The authority of the DSHS to expend the federal TANF block grant and state MOE funding is subject to approval of the Legislature in the biennial appropriations act.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: (Children & Family Services) (In support) Washington is the only state that gives unfettered discretion to the executive branch over TANF funding. There is a need for some legislative oversight in order to bring the current system into balance.

Testimony For: (Appropriations) We believe Washington is the only state in the country that has chosen the unusual experiment to give such broad authority around the welfare budget to the Governor. Because things have gotten tougher and we're not sure what Congress will do in terms of reauthorization, it's time there is a broader discussion and involvement by the Legislature regarding the TANF box.

Testimony Against: (Children & Family Services) None.

Testimony Against: (Appropriations) None.

Persons Testifying: (Children & Family Services) (In support) Tony Lee, Fremont Public Association on behalf of the Welfare Advocates Group.

Persons Testifying: (Appropriations) Lonnie Johns-Brown, Collaborative.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: (Children & Family Services) None.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: (Appropriations) None.