

SENATE BILL REPORT

2SHB 2818

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Children & Family Services & Corrections, February 26, 2004

Title: An act relating to housing-based support services for homeless families.

Brief Description: Creating the homeless families services fund.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Kagi, Boldt, Darneille, Pearson, Cooper, Linville, Hudgins, Kessler, Lantz, Conway, G. Simpson, Edwards, Sullivan, Kenney, Wood, Schual-Berke, Chase, Santos, Ormsby and Dickerson).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Children & Family Services & Corrections: 2/24/04, 2/26/04 [DPA-WM].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Stevens, Chair; Parlette, Vice Chair; Carlson, Deccio, Hargrove, McAuliffe and Regala.

Staff: Lilah Amos (786-7429)

Background: In 2001, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation provided funding for and formed a partnership with seven housing authorities in King, Snohomish, and Pierce counties to assist families who are transitioning out of homelessness. Unique to this program was the provision of housing-based support services for families in the midst of the transition. Based upon the belief that provision of housing, without more, is insufficient to pull families out of homelessness, the program emphasized provision of services such as child care, skills training, onsite case management, job search and referral, and tenant education. This program has increased work activity and income levels in the families for which housing and services were provided. Proponents of this public-private partnership desire that a similar program be available statewide, which would necessitate an ongoing stable source of public-private funding.

Summary of Amended Bill: The Homeless Families Services Fund Program is created within the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development (CTED). An account to be known as the Homeless Families Services Fund is created in the custody of the State Treasurer. The fund includes a one-time appropriation by the Legislature and private contributions. A ten-member Homeless Families Services Fund Advisory Board, with members appointed by the Governor, is established to design and administer the fund.

Grants from the Homeless Families Services Fund are to be used during the next ten years to provide services to assist homeless families dealing with problems in transitioning from homelessness. The grants will be linked to specific housing projects funded from other

sources. The board will develop criteria for grant allocations, for determining financial viability of the grant applicant, and for geographic distribution of funds. The board must review applications for grants from the fund and make recommendations to the director of CTED on allocation of grants. The board must also identify additional sources of revenue and investigate administrative options for the fund, including administration by a nonprofit corporation.

Activities eligible for funding include case management, counseling, employment referrals and job training, domestic violence services, mental health and substance abuse treatment, parenting skills education, transportation, and child care. The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) must coordinate with CTED in supporting the work of this program. Services must not inappropriately duplicate existing services. DSHS must identify and implement ways to minimize duplication between WorkFirst services and services provided by the Homeless Families Services Fund, and to report annually to the Legislature regarding this issue.

CTED must collect information from recipients which will allow improvement of the program. CTED must report a plan to the Legislature to implement this program by December 1, 2004, and must report yearly thereafter on the applications and grants from the fund.

Duties established by this legislation do not commence unless sufficient funds are appropriated for this purpose.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill: DSHS must identify and implement ways to minimize duplication between WorkFirst services and those services funded through the homeless families services fund. DSHS must report annually to the Legislature regarding this issue.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available; revised fiscal note in process.

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

Testimony For: This bill will enable crucial services to be provided to families in transition from homelessness. The services will be linked to housing which is provided for homeless families, a novel approach which has shown initial success in the Sound Families Initiative sponsored by the Gates Foundation. This bill will provide consistent funding for needed services and will promote private contribution and the cooperative use of HUD resources.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Representative Ruth Kagi, prime sponsor; Maureen Kostyack, Seattle Office of Housing; Greg Shaw, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; Seth Dawson, Washington Coalition for the Homeless, Washington State Association for Community Action.