H-3511.1

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**HOUSE BILL 2518**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**State of Washington 64th Legislature 2016 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Sawyer, Walsh, Kagi, Kilduff, Zeiger, Reykdal, Frame, McBride, Ormsby, Walkinshaw, Gregerson, Bergquist, and Stanford

AN ACT Relating to reducing intergenerational poverty; and adding a new chapter to Title 74 RCW.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The legislature finds that intergenerational poverty, which passes from parents to children, should be distinguished from situational poverty, which occurs after an event like losing employment. Intergenerational poverty can affect the lives of many future children and generations without the development of specific strategies to stop this cycle.

(2) The legislature finds that it is necessary to bring together state agencies and other stakeholders to collect data regarding intergenerational poverty and develop two generation-specific strategies to provide families the support they need to overcome a history of poverty.

(3) The creation of an intergenerational poverty tracking system, an intergenerational poverty reform commission, an intergenerational poverty advisory committee, and an annual report provided by the commission, lay the groundwork in Washington for reducing intergenerational poverty.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(1) "Commission" means the commission on intergenerational poverty reform.

(2) "Cycle of poverty" or "poverty cycle" means the set of factors or events by which the long-term poverty of a person is likely to continue and be experienced by each child of the person when the child becomes an adult unless there is outside intervention.

(3) "Intergenerational poverty" means poverty in which two or more successive generations of a family continue in the cycle of poverty and governmental dependence, and is not situational poverty.

(4) "Poverty" means the state of a person who lacks a usual or socially acceptable amount of money or material possessions as demonstrated by the person's income level being at or below the United States poverty level as defined by the most recently revised poverty income guidelines as published by the United States department of health and human services in the federal register.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The department shall establish and maintain a system to track intergenerational poverty, which must:

(a) Identify groups that have a high risk of experiencing intergenerational poverty;

(b) Identify incidents, patterns, and trends that explain or contribute to intergenerational poverty;

(c) Assist case workers, social scientists, and government officials in the study and development of effective and efficient plans and programs to help individuals and families in the state to break the cycle of poverty; and

(d) Gather and track available local, state, and national data on:

(i) Official poverty rates;

(ii) Child poverty rates;

(iii) Years spent by individuals in childhood poverty;

(iv) Years spent by individuals in adult poverty; and

(v) Related poverty information.

(2) In implementing the intergenerational poverty tracking system, the department shall:

(a) Use available data in the tracking system, including public assistance data, census data, and other data made available to the department;

(b) Develop and implement methods to integrate, compare, analyze, and validate the data for the purposes described in subsection (1) of this section;

(c) Protect the privacy of individuals living in poverty by using and distributing data within the tracking system in compliance with RCW 74.04.060, and other applicable state and federal laws;

(d) Include in the annual written report described in section 8 of this act, a report on the data, findings, and potential uses of the tracking system.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  There is created the Washington intergenerational poverty reform commission composed of:

(1) The following voting members:

(a) The secretary of the department or his or her designee;

(b) The secretary of health or his or her designee;

(c) The superintendent of public instruction or his or her designee;

(d) The executive director of the state board for community and technical colleges;

(e) The commissioner of the employment security department or his or her designee;

(f) The director of the department of commerce or his or her designee; and

(g) The director of the department of early learning;

(2) The chair of the intergenerational poverty advisory committee created in section 7 of this act as a nonvoting member.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The secretary of the department or his or her designee shall serve as chair of the commission.

(2) The chair:

(a) Is responsible for the call and conduct of meetings;

(b) Shall call and hold meetings of the commission at least quarterly; and

(c) Shall call additional meetings upon request by a majority of the commission's voting members.

(3) A majority of the voting members of the commission constitutes a quorum of the commission at any meeting and the action of the majority of voting members present is the action of the commission.

(4) The department shall provide staff support to the commission.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The commission's purpose is to:

(a) Collaborate in sharing and analyzing data and information regarding intergenerational poverty in the state with a primary focus on data and information regarding children who are at risk of continuing the cycle of poverty and welfare dependency unless outside intervention is made;

(b) Examine and analyze shared data and information regarding intergenerational poverty, including the data provided by the intergenerational poverty report described in section 8 of this act, to identify and develop effective and efficient plans, programs, and recommendations to help at-risk children in the state escape the cycle of poverty and welfare dependency;

(c) Implement data-driven policies and programs addressing poverty, public assistance, education, and other areas as needed to measurably reduce the incidence of children in the state who remain in the cycle of poverty and welfare dependency as they become adults;

(d) Establish and facilitate improved cooperation between state agencies down to the case worker level in rescuing children from intergenerational poverty and welfare dependency; and

(e) Encourage participation and input from the intergenerational poverty advisory committee established in section 7 of this act and other community resources, including academic experts, advocacy groups, nonprofit corporations, local governments, and religious institutions in exploring strategies and solutions to help children in the state who are victims of intergenerational poverty escape the cycle of poverty and welfare dependency.

(2) The commission shall:

(a) Fulfill the commission's purposes as listed in subsection (1) of this section;

(b) Study, evaluate, and report on the status and effectiveness of policies, procedures, and programs that provide services to children in the state affected by intergenerational poverty and welfare dependency;

(c) Study and evaluate the policies, procedures, and programs implemented by other states and nongovernmental entities that address the needs of children affected by intergenerational poverty and welfare dependency;

(d)(i) Identify policies, procedures, and programs, including any lack of interagency data sharing, lack of policy coordination, or current federal requirements, that are impeding efforts to help children in the state affected by intergenerational poverty escape the poverty cycle and welfare dependency; and

(ii) Implement and recommend changes to those policies and procedures;

(e) Create an ongoing five and ten-year plan, which is updated annually, containing:

(i) Measurable goals and benchmarks, including future action needed to attain those goals and benchmarks, for decreasing the incidence of intergenerational poverty among the state's children and increasing the number of the state's children who escape the poverty cycle and welfare dependency;

(ii) Implement policy, procedure, and program changes to address the needs of children affected by intergenerational poverty and help those children escape the poverty cycle and welfare dependency, including, as available over time, data to track the effectiveness of each change; and

(iii) Recommend policy, procedure, and program changes to address the needs of children affected by intergenerational poverty and to help those children escape the poverty cycle and welfare dependency, including the steps that will be required to make the recommended changes and whether further action is required by the legislature or the federal government;

(f) Ensure that each change and recommended change to a policy, procedure, or program, which is made by the commission, is supported by verifiable data;

(g) Protect the privacy of individuals living in poverty by using and distributing the data it collects or examines in compliance with RCW 74.04.060 and other applicable federal and state requirements; and

(h) Provide a forum for public comment and participation in efforts to help children in the state escape the cycle of poverty and welfare dependency.

(3) To accomplish its duties, the commission may:

(a) Request and receive from any state or local governmental agency or institution, information relating to poverty in the state, including:

(i) Reports;

(ii) Audits;

(iii) Data;

(iv) Projections; and

(v) Statistics; and

(b) Appoint special committees, in addition to the advisory committee described in section 7 of this act, to advise and assist the commission.

(4)(a) Members of a special committee described in subsection (3)(b) of this section:

(i) Shall be appointed by the commission and may include:

(A) Members of the commission; or

(B) Individuals from the private or public sector; and

(ii) Shall be reimbursed for travel expenses as provided in RCW 43.03.050 and 43.03.060.

(b) A special committee described in subsection (3)(b) of this section shall report to the commission on the progress of the special committee.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) To assist the commission, there is created the intergenerational poverty advisory committee.

(2) The advisory committee shall be composed of no more than eleven members.

(3) Members of the advisory committee shall be appointed by the chair of the commission, with the approval of the commission, and shall include at least one member from each of the following groups:

(a) Advocacy groups that focus on childhood poverty issues;

(b) Advocacy groups that focus on education issues;

(c) Academic experts in childhood poverty or education issues;

(d) Faith-based organizations that address childhood poverty or education issues; and

(e) Local government representatives that address childhood poverty or education issues.

(4) Subject to subsection (5) of this section, each member of the advisory committee shall be appointed for a four-year term unless a member is appointed to complete an unexpired term.

(5) The commission chair may adjust the length of term at the time of appointment or reappointment so that approximately half of the advisory committee is appointed every two years.

(6) The commission chair may remove an advisory committee member:

(a) If the member is unable or unwilling to carry out the member's assigned responsibilities; or

(b) For good cause.

(7) If a vacancy occurs in the advisory committee membership for any reason, a replacement may be appointed for the unexpired term.

(8) The commission chair shall select a chair of the advisory committee on an annual basis.

(9) A majority of the advisory committee constitutes a quorum of the advisory committee at any meeting and the action of the majority of members present is the action of the advisory committee.

(10) The advisory committee shall:

(a) Meet at least twice a year at the request of the commission chair or the chair of the advisory committee;

(b) Make recommendations to the commission on how the commission and the state can effectively address the needs of children affected by intergenerational poverty and achieve the purposes and duties of the commission as described in section 6 of this act; and

(c) Ensure that the advisory committee's recommendations to the commission are supported by verifiable data.

(11) The department shall provide staff support to the advisory committee.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The commission shall provide a report to the governor, the appropriate committees of the legislature, and the WorkFirst legislative executive task force.

(2) The report must:

(a) Include the five and ten-year plans described in section 6(2)(e) of this act;

(b) Describe how the commission fulfilled its statutory purposes and duties during the year;

(c) Describe policies, procedures, and programs that have been implemented or modified to help break the cycle of poverty and end welfare dependency for children in the state affected by intergenerational poverty; and

(d) Contain recommendations on how the state should act to address issues relating to breaking the cycle of poverty and ending welfare dependency for children in the state affected by intergenerational poverty.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  Sections 1 through 8 of this act constitute a new chapter in Title 74 RCW.

**--- END ---**