SENATE BILL REPORT
ESHB 2121

As of April 5, 2017

Title: An act relating to income eligibility for temporary assistance for needy families benefits for a child who lives with a nonparent caregiver.

Brief Description: Repealing income eligibility for temporary assistance for needy families benefits for a child who lives with a nonparent caregiver.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Pettigrew, Tarleton and Macri).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/03/17, 84-13.
Committee Activity: Human Services, Mental Health & Housing: 3/15/17, 3/20/17 [DP-WM, DNP].
Ways & Means: 3/29/17.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Increases the income-eligibility requirements for nonparental caregivers receiving child-only Temporary Assistance for Needy Families grants from 300 percent to 400 percent of the federal poverty level.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, MENTAL HEALTH & HOUSING

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.
Signed by Senators O'Ban, Chair; Miloscia, Vice Chair; Darneille, Ranking Minority Member; Carlyle, Hunt and Walsh.

Minority Report: Do not pass.
Signed by Senator Padden.

Staff: Alison Mendiola (786-7444)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Maria Hovde (786-7474)

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.

Background: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). TANF is a federal block grant that provides temporary cash assistance, subsidized childcare, and work programs for families. States use TANF block grants to operate their own programs. State programs differ, but operate in accordance with the following purposes set forth in federal law:

- to provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives;
- to end the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage;
- to prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies; and
- to encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

In 2011, legislation was enacted that required the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to establish income eligibility rules for nonparental caregivers receiving a TANF grant on behalf of a child, other than a foster child, who is living with the caregiver. A caregiver with an income above 300 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) is not eligible for child-only TANF benefits—300 percent of the FPL for a family of one was $35,310 and 400 percent of the FPL was $47,080 in 2016. Three hundred percent of the FPL for a family of three was $60,480 and 400 percent of the FPL was $80,640 in 2016. Nonparental caregivers with incomes above 200 percent but less than 300 percent of the FPL may receive a reduced TANF grant according to a sliding scale.

Summary of Bill: The income-eligibility requirements for child-only TANF grants for nonparental caregivers is increased from 300 percent to 400 percent of the FPL.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect on November 1, 2017. However, the bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Human Services, Mental Health & Housing): PRO: This bill helps struggling families makes ends meet. Many nonparental caregivers are grandmothers. A grandmother might take in three or four children and live on a fixed income. Our state has a high rate of kinship care—45 percent of kids in out-of-home care—and not all are licensed foster homes. If you factor in informal arrangements, the number of kids living with relatives is probably ten times higher. Means testing was only added in 2011 due to budget issues. This bill does not eliminate means testing but increases the caregiver's income from a maximum of 300 percent of the FPL to 400 percent.

Persons Testifying (Human Services, Mental Health & Housing): PRO: Representative Eric Pettigrew, Prime Sponsor; Laurie Lippold, Partners for Our Children.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Human Services, Mental Health & Housing): No one.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means): PRO: Kinship caregivers tend to be older, grandparents, and have lower income. For those that need it, financial assistance is necessary to prevent children from going into out-of-home placement. Although, it would be preferred if means testing for these caregivers was eliminated altogether.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: Laurie Lippold, Partners for Our Children.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Ways & Means): No one.