

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5440

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As of February 7, 2017

**Title:** An act relating to establishing the legislative-executive WorkFirst poverty reduction oversight task force.

**Brief Description:** Establishing the legislative-executive WorkFirst poverty reduction oversight task force.

**Sponsors:** Senators Zeiger, Darneille, O'Ban, Walsh, Miloscia, Hunt, Carlyle and Warnick.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Human Services, Mental Health & Housing: 2/01/17.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Renames the Legislative-Executive WorkFirst Oversight Task Force as the Legislative-Executive WorkFirst Poverty Reduction Oversight Task Force (Task Force).
- Creates the Intergenerational Poverty Advisory Committee to advise the Task Force.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, MENTAL HEALTH & HOUSING

**Staff:** Alison Mendiola (786-7444)

**Background:** WorkFirst Program. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is a federal block grant that provides temporary cash assistance, subsidized childcare, and work programs for families. The Washington WorkFirst Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Act of 1997 created the WorkFirst program. With limited exceptions, adult TANF recipients must participate in one or more WorkFirst activities. These activities may include paid and unpaid employment based training programs, career development, community service, work skills assessment and job hunting training, and vocational training programs. WorkFirst participants may receive additional services such as child support collection, food assistance, and subsidized childcare.

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) administers the WorkFirst program in partnership with the Department of Commerce (Commerce), the Department of Early

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Learning (DEL), the Employment Security Department (ESD), the Office of Financial Management (OFM), and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC).

Legislative-Executive WorkFirst Oversight Task Force. The Legislative-Executive WorkFirst Oversight Task Force was established in 2011 to oversee a redesign of the WorkFirst program and the operation of the TANF program. It is composed of four legislative members and six Governor-appointed agency representatives. Agencies represented include DSHS, Commerce, DEL, ESD, OFM, and SBCTC.

Poverty. The 2016 federal poverty guideline for a household of four is a monthly income of \$2,025. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that in 2015 approximately 12 percent of Washingtonians lived below the federal poverty guidelines.

**Summary of Bill:** Legislative-Executive WorkFirst Poverty Reduction Oversight Task Force. The Legislative-Executive WorkFirst Oversight Task Force is renamed as the Legislative-Executive WorkFirst Poverty Reduction Oversight Task Force (Task Force) and is tasked with the following goals:

- reducing the overall percentage of people living below 200 percent of the federal poverty level by 50 percent by the year 2025; and
- preventing and addressing adverse childhood experiences and the trauma of children living in poverty.

The Task Force must review laws and budget appropriations for their impacts on Task Force goals and collaborate with the Intergenerational Poverty Advisory Committee (Committee), partner agencies, and stakeholders to share and analyze data and develop poverty reduction strategies.

Intergenerational Poverty Advisory Committee. The Committee is created to advise the Task Force. Committee members are appointed by the Secretary of the DSHS. The Committee must choose co-chairs from among its membership. Committee members must include representatives of advocacy groups, academic experts in childhood poverty or education, faith-based organizations, tribal governments, families impacted by poverty, local government, the business community, the Commission on African-American Affairs, the Commission on Hispanic Affairs, the Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs, and the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs.

Task Force Membership and Expenses. OFM is removed as a Task Force member. Representatives from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Department of Corrections, and the co-chairs of the Committee are added as voting members of the Task Force. The total number of voting members of the Task Force is increased from 10 to 13. The Governor must direct representatives from the Department of Health, the Health Care Authority, and the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board to serve in an advisory capacity to the Task Force. The Governor must also request the participation of tribal governments. Legislative members of the Task Force are reimbursed for travel expenses. Nonlegislative members may be reimbursed for travel expenses. Expenses of the Task Force are paid jointly by the Senate and the House of Representatives, with expenditures subject to approval by the respective bodies.

Data and Reporting. DSHS may establish a data tracking system to track specified criteria related to poverty rates and trends. The data may be used to support recommendations made by the Committee and may be shared with the Task Force. The Task Force must direct DSHS to develop five and ten year plans to address intergenerational poverty. Subject to approval by the Task Force, DSHS must submit the plans to the Governor and the Legislature by December 1, 2018. Beginning December 1, 2019, the Task Force must report annually to the Governor and the Legislature on progress towards meeting the goals of poverty reduction and prevention of adverse childhood experiences and trauma for children living in poverty.

Definitions. Cycle of poverty or poverty cycle is defined as 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. Intergenerational poverty is defined as 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.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: We need to change the way we discuss poverty, we often talk about income levels but we need to do more. We need to be attentive to the intergenerational nature of poverty and factor that into our planning. The number one driver of costs in government is the breakdown of the family and this bill addresses this issue. Poverty impacts both single-parent families and intact families. This bill broadens the scope of an existing task force. Poverty doesn't exist in solos. We need to look across systems and include all voices at the table and dig deeper into the data to understand poverty and intergenerational poverty.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Hans Zeiger, Prime Sponsor; Alex Hur, Statewide Poverty Action Network; Julie Watts, Washington State Budget and Policy Center; Nick Federici, United Way of King County; David Stillman, DSHS Economic Services Administration.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** No one.