

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6495

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As Reported by Senate Committee On:  
Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation, February 4, 2020

**Title:** An act relating to essential needs and housing support eligibility.

**Brief Description:** Regarding essential needs and housing support eligibility.

**Sponsors:** Senator Walsh; by request of Department of Social and Health Services.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation: 1/29/20, 2/04/20 [DP].

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Expands eligibility for the Essential Needs and Housing Support Program to include recipients of the Pregnant Women Assistance Program.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, REENTRY & REHABILITATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Darneille, Chair; Nguyen, Vice Chair; Walsh, Ranking Member; Cleveland, O'Ban, Wilson, C. and Zeiger.

**Staff:** Alison Mendiola (786-7488)

**Background:** Essential Needs and Housing Support Program. The Essential Needs and Housing Support (HEN) program provides rental assistance and other housing support, as well as essential needs items such as personal hygiene and household supplies, bus passes, and laundry tokens. Housing support is assistance provided to maintain existing housing when the recipient is at substantial risk of becoming homeless; to obtain housing; or to obtain heat, electricity, natural gas, sewer, garbage, and water services when the recipient is at substantial risk of losing these services. Recipients of HEN referrals do not receive a cash grant.

Eligible individuals must meet income requirements; be temporarily unable to work for at least 90 days due to physical or mental incapacity; and be ineligible for the Aged, Blind, or

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Disabled program, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, and other cash assistance programs.

HEN is funded by state general funds appropriated in the biennial operating budget.

Pregnant Woman Assistance. The Pregnant Women Assistance Program (PWA) was created by the Legislature in 2011. PWA is a state funded program providing cash assistance to low-income pregnant individuals who are not eligible for TANF due to the 60-month time limits, or the State Family Assistance program for a reason other than not cooperating with TANF program rules. This program provides a maximum monthly cash grant of \$197. To be eligible, the individual must reside in Washington, be pregnant, meet income and resource requirements, and meet citizenship or alien status requirements.

**Summary of Bill:** Within funds appropriated from the Department of Commerce (Commerce), recipients of the PWA program are eligible for referral to the HEN program, provided they meet eligibility requirements. Recipients of PWA are eligible for HEN for 24 consecutive months from the date Commerce determines PWA eligibility.

**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: This is DSHS request legislation. A person eligible for PWA could access HEN for 24 consecutive months. Currently, PWA benefits end when the mom is no longer pregnant. This bill ensures that the mom and family still receive some support that does not end with a birth of a child.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Maureen Walsh, Prime Sponsor; David Stillman, Department of Social and Health Services.

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