

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5838

As Passed House:

March 3, 2022

Title: An act relating to providing a monthly diaper subsidy for parents or other caregivers receiving temporary assistance for needy families.

Brief Description: Providing a monthly diaper subsidy for parents or other caregivers receiving temporary assistance for needy families.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation (originally sponsored by Senators Nobles, Rivers, Das, Frockt, Hasegawa, Hunt, Kuderer, Lovelett, Nguyen, Robinson, Saldaña, Stanford, Trudeau and Wilson, C.).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Housing, Human Services & Veterans: 2/18/22, 2/22/22 [DP];

Appropriations: 2/24/22, 2/28/22 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/3/22, 63-35.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Provides that, subject to appropriation, the Department of Social and Health Services may make additional monthly payments to recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families with children under the age of 3, for the purpose of child-related necessities such as diapers.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING, HUMAN SERVICES & VETERANS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Peterson, Chair; Taylor, Vice Chair; Gilday, Ranking Minority Member; Barkis, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bateman, Chopp, Donaghy, Jacobsen and Leavitt.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Staff: Lena Langer (786-7192).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 23 members: Representatives Ormsby, Chair; Bergquist, Vice Chair; Gregerson, Vice Chair; Macri, Vice Chair; Stokesbary, Ranking Minority Member; Chopp, Cody, Dolan, Fitzgibbon, Frame, Hansen, Harris, Jacobsen, Johnson, J., Lekanoff, Pollet, Ryu, Senn, Springer, Steele, Stonier, Sullivan and Tharinger.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives MacEwen, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Boehnke, Chandler, Dye and Rude.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Chambers, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Corry, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Caldier, Hoff and Schmick.

Staff: Linda Merelle (786-7092).

Background:

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is a federal block grant that provides temporary cash assistance, subsidized childcare, and work programs for low-income households with children. The TANF program is administered by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS).

Adults in families receiving TANF participate in the WorkFirst program, which helps participants resolve barriers and prepare for and find jobs. In fiscal year 2021, the average monthly TANF caseload was 29,701, with an average payment of \$470.63, and 29.8 percent of the caseloads—13,556—included children age 5 and under.

Cash and Food Assistance.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, also referred to as Basic Food, provides food benefits to eligible low-income households. A household is considered categorically eligible for Basic Food when all members of the household receive, or are authorized to receive, payments or services from certain programs, or the household income is at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. Families receiving TANF are categorically eligible for Basic Food. Basic Food cannot be used to purchase diapers.

Summary of Bill:

Subject to appropriation, the DSHS may make additional monthly payments to recipients of TANF with children under the age of 3, for the purpose of child-related necessities such as diapers. The DSHS must set the benefit amounts in rule in accordance with the amounts

appropriated.

The DSHS must make reasonable efforts to timely communicate the new subsidy at implementation and as the diaper subsidy eligibility changes.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on November 1, 2023. However, the bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Housing, Human Services & Veterans):

(In support) This bill will equip parents and caregivers with the ability to purchase diapers, which is a basic necessity. No child should have to go without their basic needs being met. The main goal of TANF is to help families meet their most basic needs and to protect children from the most devastating effects of deep poverty. Because the grant amount TANF recipients receive is as low as it is, families are often faced with choosing which basic need to meet. This bill provides an increase in the grant amount where there is a clear and demonstrated need, purchasing diapers. No public assistance programs help families pay for diapers. In preparing this bill, advocates worked with the DSHS to understand how to minimize the impact of an additional diaper subsidy on Basic Food. Adding \$125 per month to TANF for the diaper grant reflects the real cost of diapers, and for all eligible TANF recipients, provides a net increase in family resources, even while causing a slight change to Basic Food.

(Opposed) None.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Appropriations):

(In support) Unlike other essentials, no public assistance program helps to pay for diapers. The policy under this bill is an acknowledgment that diapering babies is not a choice. Diaper costs have increased by 12 percent since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Parents who receive benefits pursuant to the TANF program are among the most low-income parents in the state. These families do not have enough income to meet basic needs and are forced to make extraordinarily difficult choices. This benefit would be provided at a time when the cost of diapers is extremely high and families are most vulnerable.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying (Housing, Human Services & Veterans): Senator T'wina Nobles, prime sponsor; Toni Sarge, WestSide Baby; Lianna Kressin, Statewide Poverty Action Network; Claire Lane, Anti-Hunger and Nutrition Coalition; and Rubit Chavez, Catholic

Community Services.

Persons Testifying (Appropriations): Toni Sarge, WestSide Baby; and Claire Lane, Anti-Hunger and Nutrition Coalition.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Housing, Human Services & Veterans): None.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Appropriations): None.