

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5652

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As Passed Senate, March 7, 1995

**Title:** An act relating to welfare fraud.

**Brief Description:** Temporarily prohibiting public assistance payments for willful violators of public assistance eligibility provisions.

**Sponsors:** Senators Gaspard, McDonald, Smith, Quigley, Wojahn, Hargrove, Heavey, Winsley, Sheldon, Fraser, Loveland, Fairley, Oke, McAuliffe, Spanel, Kohl, Franklin, Drew, Haugen, Owen, Bauer, Snyder, Deccio and Rasmussen.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Health & Long-Term Care: 2/10/95, 2/16/95 [DP].  
Passed Senate, 3/7/95, 48-0.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Quigley, Chair; Wojahn, Vice Chair; C. Anderson, Deccio, Fairley, Franklin, Moyer, Winsley and Wood.

**Staff:** Joanne Conrad (786-7472)

**Background:** Recent investigation and prosecution of a major welfare fraud case in Washington State raises the issue of equity in the distribution of limited public assistance resources. Concerns exist regarding appropriate treatment of those who have committed fraud. Current law states that persons imprisoned for committing any crime shall not receive assistance during the period of imprisonment.

**Summary of Bill:** Conviction for specified unlawful practices constituting welfare fraud, whether or not resulting in imprisonment, is a bar to receiving public assistance for a flexible period of time to be determined by the court. The minimum sanction is six months.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 30, 1995.

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

**Testimony For:** Fairness requires that only those entitled should benefit from public assistance. Abuse of the system should be penalized.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** Senator Gaspard; Jean Soliz, Jerry Fredman, DSHS.

**House Amendment(s):** Public assistance is suspended by DSHS if an applicant or recipient intentionally provides false or misleading information or commits an act designed to fraudulently obtain benefits.

The period of suspension is six months for a first violation, 12 months for a second, and permanent for a third.

DSHS implements the SAVE program, a federal computer program to verify aliens' applications for entitlements, and takes other measures to prevent fraud by aliens.