

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1867

As Reported by House Committee On:
Children & Family Services

Title: An act relating to funding restrictions for the Washington WorkFirst program.

Brief Description: Restricting the use of funds for the Washington WorkFirst program.

Sponsors: Representative Kagi.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Children & Family Services: 2/14/05, 2/21/05 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Subjects all expenditures of WorkFirst program funding to appropriation and any conditions contained in the biennial or supplemental operating budget.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Roberts, Vice Chair; Hinkle, Ranking Minority Member; Walsh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Darneille, Dickerson, Dunn, Haler and Pettigrew.

Staff: Cynthia Forland (786-7152).

Background:

In 1996, the federal government enacted welfare reform, shifting the emphasis of the federal program to a "work first" approach. In 1997, Washington enacted its version of welfare reform, establishing the WorkFirst program. The WorkFirst program emphasizes the importance of gaining employment and staying employed.

The WorkFirst program is funded by the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant and state Maintenance of Effort (MOE) funding. The Legislature is required to appropriate this funding for the WorkFirst program to the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) each year in the biennial appropriations act. The DSHS may expend those funds in any manner that effectively accomplishes the outcome measures for the WorkFirst program defined by state law.

Summary of Bill:

The Legislature is required to appropriate the federal TANF block grant and state MOE funding. The DSHS is required to expend that funding in a manner that effectively accomplishes the outcome measures for the WorkFirst program defined by state law. Expenditure of those funds is subject to appropriation and subject to any conditions contained in the biennial or supplemental operating budget.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: None requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: We are the only state in the country that gave the Legislature's entire authority to the Governor to implement and manage the TANF program. Last year, a bill passed the House but was not heard in the Senate to return authority to the Legislature to appropriate the funding for TANF. The Governor had the flexibility to mold this program particularly as it was being initially operated to respond to changing conditions, but over time it has been very difficult for the Legislature to have any influence over what happens with this program internally. It is time that the state joins the rest of the country in saying that the Legislature has some role in this. The Legislature should get more involved and have more say in the TANF box, because these funds are critical to supporting school success and quality child care.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Kagi, prime sponsor; Tony Lee, Fremont Public Association; and Janet Frieling, The Collaborative.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.