
**Children & Family Services
Committee**

HB 2970

Brief Description: Preserving the WorkFirst child safety net program.

Sponsors: Representatives Pettigrew, Haler, McIntire, Darneille, Hasegawa, Walsh, Clibborn, Cody, Hunt, Santos, Kessler, Appleton, Kenney, Roberts, P. Sullivan, Moeller, Schual-Berke, Springer, Simpson and Hudgins.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes a statutory child safety net payment under WorkFirst.

Hearing Date: 1/30/06

Staff: Sydney Forrester (786-7120).

Background:

WorkFirst is Washington's program of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) established in 1997. WorkFirst requires that unless a good cause exemption applies, recipients of TANF grants must be engaged in work or work activities as a condition of continued eligibility. In cases where a recipient does not engage in work or work activities and is not eligible for a good cause exemption, the family's TANF grant is reduced by the recipient's share and, if the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) determines it is appropriate, the entire grant may be terminated. Termination of the entire grant is commonly called a *full family sanction*. As a matter of practice, however, the DSHS has not imposed full family sanctions.

Federal law requires a time limit of a lifetime maximum of 60 months for receipt of TANF cash grants, but allows a state to exempt up to 20% of its caseload from the limitation. In 2002, the first of Washington's TANF recipients began reaching the 60-month limit on eligibility for assistance. Governor Locke responded by establishing the child safety net payment.

Child Safety Net Payments

Under rules adopted by the DSHS, a child safety net payment is an extension of the family's grant to maintain housing and basic utilities and other verified needs of children in the household when an adult in the household is in sanction status for non-participation and the family has been receiving a TANF grant for more than 60 months.

The topic of full family sanctions and child safety net payments was studied by the WorkFirst Reexamination Project in the summer of 2005. The group's mission was to provide Governor Gregoire with recommendations for a sustainable welfare system consistent with the priority goals of the program. The Governor has indicated an intent not to implement a strict 60-month time limit. The proposed noncompliance sanction policy does not automatically include a child safety net payment.

Summary of Bill:

A child safety net payment (CSNP) is established. The DSHS must exempt a recipient's family from sanctions for noncompliance with work participation requirements. The CSNP is for the purpose of maintaining housing, basic utilities, and other verified needs of the children in the home. The payment must be not less than sixty percent of the family's regular monthly grant.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on 1/18/06.

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