

SENATE BILL REPORT

E2SSB 5213

As Passed Senate, March 14, 2005

Title: An act relating to supporting the long-term success of families with children by removing barriers to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and the WorkFirst programs.

Brief Description: Supporting the long-term success of families with children by removing barriers to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and the WorkFirst programs.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Brandland, Hargrove, Esser, Regala, McAuliffe, Thibaudeau, Stevens, Kohl-Welles and Shin).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 1/24/05, 2/14/05 [DPS-WM].

Ways & Means: 3/1/05, 3/7/05 [DP2S].

Passed Senate: 3/14/05, 46-2.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5213 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Hargrove, Chair; Regala, Vice Chair; Stevens, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Carrell, McAuliffe and Thibaudeau.

Staff: Edith Rice (786-7444)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Second Substitute Senate Bill No. 5213 be substituted therefor, and the second substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Prentice, Chair; Doumit, Vice Chair; Fraser, Vice Chair; Zarelli, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Fairley, Hewitt, Kohl-Welles, Parlette, Pflug, Pridemore, Rasmussen, Regala, Roach, Rockefeller, Schoesler and Thibaudeau.

Staff: Carole Holland (786-7441)

Background: Current state law permits eligible families to receive cash assistance through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program if they are in need, otherwise eligible, and not an inmate at a public institution. They may be required to participate in a drug or alcohol treatment program in order to receive benefits if they have been assessed as drug or alcohol dependent and in need of treatment to become employable.

Washington State administers TANF benefits through its WorkFirst program. The WorkFirst program emphasizes the importance of gaining employment and staying employed. WorkFirst participants are assessed for employment barriers which may include mental health, medical

or substance abuse issues which must be addressed before an applicant can become fully employable.

Current state law requires that in order to be eligible for this assistance, an applicant with a drug-related felony conviction after August, 1996 must have been assessed as chemically dependent and be participating in, or have completed, rehabilitation which includes chemical dependency and vocational components. It also requires that they not have been convicted of a drug-related felony in the three years prior to the most current conviction. States can choose to opt out of such restrictions.

Summary of Bill: The eligibility requirements that a TANF applicant with a drug-related felony conviction after August 21, 1996 be assessed as chemically dependent, participate in or complete rehabilitation with chemical dependency and vocational components is removed. The requirement that they not have been convicted of a drug-related felony in the three years prior to the most current conviction is also removed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available on original bill and first substitute bill.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For (Human Services & Corrections): Offenders don't need another barrier to re-entry into society. They've done their time. Other states have removed this barrier to receiving services.

Testimony Against (Human Services & Corrections): None.

Who Testified (Human Services & Corrections): PRO: Senator Brandland, prime sponsor; Bob Cooper, ACLU; Duane French, Dept. of Social and Health Services, ESA/DEAP.

Testimony For (Ways & Means): The substitute bill has problems related to TANF grant eligibility and may not help the families it is intended to help. Please consider the original bill.

Testimony Against (Ways & Means): None.

Who Testified (Ways & Means): PRO: Bob Cooper, ACLU.