



House of Representatives

General Assembly

File No. 770

January Session, 2001

Substitute House Bill No. 6939

House of Representatives, May 15, 2001

The Committee on Appropriations reported through REP. DYSON of the 94th Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the House, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

AN ACT PROMOTING ADMINISTRATIVE EFFICIENCY IN ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS FUNDED OR ADMINISTERED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. (NEW) (a) The council established to monitor the
2 implementation of the temporary family assistance program and the
3 employment services program pursuant to section 17b-29 of the general
4 statutes, in conjunction with the Department of Social Services, shall (1)
5 review the application forms for all assistance programs which are
6 funded or administered in whole or in part by said department and for
7 which a recipient of temporary family assistance may be eligible, and (2)
8 make recommendations to streamline or consolidate such application
9 forms.

10 (b) Not later than February 1, 2002, the council shall submit a report
11 of its findings and recommendations to the joint standing committee of
12 the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to human

13 services.

14 Sec. 2. Section 17b-60 of the general statutes is repealed and the
15 following is substituted in lieu thereof:

16 An aggrieved person authorized by law to request a fair hearing on
17 a decision of the Commissioner of Social Services or the conservator of
18 any such person on [his] behalf of such person may make application
19 for such hearing in writing over his or her signature to the
20 commissioner and shall state in such application in simple language
21 the reasons why he or she claims to be aggrieved. Such application
22 shall be mailed to the commissioner within sixty days after the
23 rendition of such decision. The commissioner shall thereupon hold a
24 fair hearing within thirty days from receipt thereof and shall, at least
25 ten days prior to the date of such hearing, mail a notice, giving the
26 time and place thereof, to such aggrieved person, or if the application
27 concerns [a denial of or failure to provide emergency housing] an
28 urgent, unmet need, the commissioner shall hold a fair hearing within
29 [four] seven business days from receipt thereof, and shall make all
30 reasonable efforts to provide notice of the time and place of the fair
31 hearing to such aggrieved person at least [one] three business [day]
32 days prior to said hearing. A reasonable period of continuance may be
33 granted for good cause. The aggrieved person shall appear personally
34 at the hearing, unless his or her physical or mental condition precludes
35 appearing in person, and may be represented by an attorney or other
36 authorized representative. A stenographic or mechanical record shall
37 be made of each hearing, but need not be transcribed except (1) in the
38 event of an appeal from the decision of the hearing officer or (2) if a
39 copy is requested by the aggrieved person, in either of which cases it
40 shall be furnished by the Commissioner of Social Services without
41 charge. The Commissioner of Social Services and any person
42 authorized by [him] said commissioner to conduct any hearing under
43 the provisions of this section shall have power to administer oaths and
44 take testimony under oath relative to the matter of the hearing and

45 may subpoena witnesses and require the production of records, papers
46 and documents pertinent to such hearing. No witness under subpoena
47 authorized to be issued by the provisions of this section shall be
48 excused from testifying or from producing records, papers or
49 documents on the ground that such testimony or the production of
50 such records or other documentary evidence would tend to
51 incriminate [him] such witness, but such evidence or the records or
52 papers so produced shall not be used in any criminal proceeding
53 against him or her. If any person disobeys such process or, having
54 appeared in obedience thereto, refuses to answer any pertinent
55 question [put to him] by the commissioner or [his] the commissioner's
56 authorized agent or to produce any records and papers pursuant
57 thereto, the commissioner or [his] such agent may apply to the
58 superior court for the judicial district of Hartford or for the judicial
59 district wherein the person resides, or to any judge of said court if the
60 same is not in session, setting forth such disobedience to process or
61 refusal to answer, and said court or such judge shall cite such person to
62 appear before said court or such judge to answer such question or to
63 produce such records and papers and, upon [his] refusal to do so, shall
64 commit such person to a community correctional center until [he] such
65 person testifies, but not for a longer period than sixty days.
66 Notwithstanding the serving of the term of such commitment by any
67 person, the commissioner or [his] the commissioner's authorized agent
68 may proceed with such inquiry and examination as if the witness had
69 not previously been called upon to testify. Officers who serve
70 subpoenas issued by the commissioner or under [his] the authority of
71 the commissioner and witnesses attending hearings conducted by
72 [him] the commissioner hereunder shall receive like fees and
73 compensation as officers and witnesses in the courts of this state to be
74 paid on vouchers of the commissioner on order of the Comptroller. For
75 the purposes of this section, "urgent, unmet need" includes a denial of
76 or failure to provide emergency housing, a denial of or failure to
77 provide food stamps where the household meets the criteria for

78 processing on an expedited basis, a denial of or failure to process an
79 application for cash assistance under the temporary family assistance
80 program including extensions, a denial of or failure to process an
81 application for medical assistance, or a denial of or failure to provide,
82 in a timely manner, medical services.

83 Sec. 3. Subsection (a) of section 17b-61 of the general statutes is
84 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof:

85 (a) Not later than sixty days after such hearing, or [~~three~~] seven
86 business days if the hearing concerns [a denial of or failure to provide
87 emergency housing] an urgent, unmet need, as defined in section 17b-
88 60, as amended by this act, the commissioner or [~~his~~] a designated
89 hearing officer shall render a final decision based upon all the evidence
90 introduced [~~before him~~] and applying all pertinent provisions of law,
91 regulations and departmental policy, and such final decision shall
92 supersede the decision made without a hearing, provided final
93 definitive administrative action shall be taken by the commissioner or
94 [~~his~~] such designee within ninety days after the request of such hearing
95 pursuant to section 17b-60. Notice of such final decision shall be given
96 to the aggrieved person by mailing [~~him~~] a copy thereof within one
97 business day of its rendition. Such decision after hearing shall be final
98 except as provided in subsections (b) and (c) of this section.

99 Sec. 4. Section 17b-112 of the general statutes is repealed and the
100 following is substituted in lieu thereof:

101 (a) The Department of Social Services shall administer a temporary
102 family assistance program under which cash assistance shall be
103 provided to eligible families in accordance with the temporary
104 assistance for needy families program, established pursuant to the
105 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of
106 1996. Under the temporary family assistance program, benefits shall be
107 provided to a family for not longer than twenty-one months, except as
108 provided in subsections (b) and [~~(c)~~] (d) of this section. For the purpose

109 of calculating said twenty-one-month time limit, months of assistance
110 received on and after January 1, 1996, pursuant to time limits under
111 the aid to families with dependent children program, shall be
112 included. For purposes of this section, "family" means one or more
113 individuals who apply for or receive assistance together under the
114 temporary family assistance program.

115 (b) The Commissioner of Social Services shall exempt a family from
116 such time-limited benefits for circumstances including, but not limited
117 to: (1) A family with a needy caretaker relative who is incapacitated or
118 of an advanced age, as defined by the commissioner, if there is no
119 other nonexempt caretaker relative in the household; (2) a family with
120 a needy caretaker relative who is needed in the home because of the
121 incapacity of another member of the household, if there is no other
122 nonexempt caretaker relative in the household; (3) a family with a
123 caretaker relative who is not legally responsible for the dependent
124 children in the household if such relative's needs are not considered in
125 calculating the amount of the benefit and there is no other nonexempt
126 caretaker relative in the household; (4) a family with a caretaker
127 relative caring for a child who is under one year of age and who was
128 born not more than ten months after the family's enrollment if there is
129 no other nonexempt caretaker relative in the household; (5) a family
130 with a pregnant or postpartum caretaker relative if a physician has
131 indicated that such relative is unable to work and there is no other
132 nonexempt caretaker relative in the household; (6) a family with a
133 caretaker relative determined by the commissioner to be unemployable
134 and there is no other nonexempt caretaker relative in the household;
135 and (7) minor parents attending and satisfactorily completing high
136 school or high school equivalency programs.

137 (c) A family who is subject to time-limited benefits shall, for good
138 cause, be excused from failing to participate in a work activity, as
139 defined in section 17b-112a. The Commissioner of Social Services shall
140 make a finding of good cause for failure to participate in a work

141 activity if the family fails to comply with the requirements concerning
142 work activity due to circumstances beyond the control of the family
143 which prevent compliance with such requirements. Such
144 circumstances shall include the unavailability or inaccessibility of safe
145 and adequate child care or the inability to guarantee payment for child
146 care by the Department of Social Services or its contractor.

147 [(c)] (d) A family who is subject to time-limited benefits may
148 petition the Commissioner of Social Services for six-month extensions
149 of such benefits. The commissioner shall grant such an extension to a
150 family who has made a good faith effort to comply with the
151 requirements of the program and despite such effort has a total family
152 income at a level below the payment standard, or has encountered
153 circumstances preventing employment including, but not limited to:
154 (1) Domestic violence or physical harm to such family's children; or (2)
155 other circumstances beyond such family's control. [Earned income
156 counting towards total family income shall have ninety dollars
157 disregarded.] When calculating total family income, the commissioner
158 shall disregard ninety dollars of earned income. Such family shall be
159 notified by the department of the right to petition for such extensions.
160 A family who is ineligible for six-month extensions based on a lack of
161 good faith effort to seek and maintain employment shall be eligible for
162 such extensions so long as the nonexempt caretaker relative has
163 earnings of at least five hundred dollars in any consecutive three-
164 month period since discontinuance from the program. A family who is
165 ineligible for such extensions based on the receipt of sanctions or a
166 determination that such family has not made a good faith effort to seek
167 and maintain employment and who did not appeal such sanctions or
168 determination pursuant to section 17b-60, as amended by this act, may
169 request and shall receive a review of such sanctions or determination
170 by the commissioner. The commissioner shall conduct such review and
171 notify the family, in writing, of any findings within thirty days of
172 receipt of the request for review. If the commissioner overturns such
173 sanctions or determination after such review, such family shall be

174 granted such extensions provided it is otherwise eligible. If the
175 commissioner upholds such sanctions or determination, such family
176 may request and shall be provided a fair hearing in accordance with
177 section 17b-60, as amended by this act.

178 [(d)] (e) Medicaid eligibility shall be extended for two years to a
179 family who becomes ineligible for cash assistance while employed or a
180 family with an adult who, within six months of becoming ineligible,
181 becomes employed.

182 [(e)] (f) Under said program (1) no family shall be eligible that has
183 total gross earnings exceeding the federal poverty level, however, in
184 the calculation of the benefit amount for eligible families and
185 previously eligible families that become ineligible temporarily because
186 of receipt of workers' compensation benefits by a family member who
187 subsequently returns to work immediately after the period of receipt of
188 such benefits, earned income shall be disregarded up to the federal
189 poverty level; (2) the increase in benefits to a family in which an infant
190 is born after the initial ten months of participation in the program shall
191 be limited to an amount equal to fifty per cent of the average
192 incremental difference between the amounts paid per each family size;
193 and (3) a disqualification penalty shall be established for failure to
194 cooperate with the biometric identifier system.

195 [(f)] (g) A family receiving assistance under said program shall
196 cooperate with child support enforcement, under title IV-D of the
197 Social Security Act. A family shall be ineligible for benefits for failure
198 to cooperate with child support enforcement.

199 [(g)] (h) A family leaving assistance at the end of said twenty-one-
200 month time limit, including a family with income above the payment
201 standard, shall have an interview for the purpose of being informed of
202 services that may continue to be available to such family, including
203 employment services available through the Labor Department. Said
204 interview shall contain a determination of benefits available to said

205 family provided by the Department of Social Services. Said interview
206 shall also include a determination of whether such family is eligible for
207 food stamps or Medicaid. Information and referrals shall be made to
208 such a family for services and benefits including, but not limited to, the
209 earned income tax credit, rental subsidies emergency housing,
210 employment services and energy assistance.

211 [(h)] (i) An applicant or recipient of temporary family assistance
212 who is adversely affected by a decision of the Commissioner of Social
213 Services may request and shall be provided a hearing in accordance
214 with section 17b-60.

215 [(i)] (j) The commissioner may continue to operate under all or
216 portions of the federal waivers granted under Section 1115 of the Social
217 Security Act for the demonstration entitled "Reach For Jobs First".
218 Notwithstanding continuation of the provisions of said federal
219 waivers, the commissioner shall continue the evaluation of the
220 effectiveness of the temporary family assistance program and may
221 continue to utilize a control group using different program
222 requirements.

223 [(j)] (k) The commissioner shall report, annually on or before
224 November fifteenth, to the joint standing committees of the General
225 Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to human services and
226 appropriations and the budgets of state agencies on the funding
227 requirements necessary to support the programs funded by the
228 temporary assistance for needy families block grant.

229 [(k)] (l) The Commissioner of Social Services shall implement
230 policies and procedures necessary for the purposes of this section
231 while in the process of adopting such policies and procedures in
232 regulation form, provided the commissioner prints notice of intention
233 to adopt the regulations in the Connecticut Law Journal within twenty
234 days of implementing such policies and procedures. Final regulations
235 shall be submitted to the legislative regulation review committee no

236 later than November 15, 1997. Policies and procedures implemented
237 pursuant to this subsection shall be valid until the time final
238 regulations are effective.

239 Sec. 5. Subsection (a) of section 17b-112b of the general statutes is
240 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof:

241 (a) An applicant or recipient who is a past or present victim of
242 domestic violence or at risk of further domestic violence, pursuant to
243 subsection (c) of section 17b-112a, shall, for good cause: (1) Be excused
244 from failing to participate in a work activity; or (2) be exempted from
245 child support enforcement requirements pursuant to subsection [(f)]
246 (g) of section 17b-112, as amended by this act. Such an applicant or
247 recipient may, for good cause, be granted an extension of cash
248 assistance beyond twenty-one months, provided the domestic violence
249 experienced is of sufficient magnitude to reasonably render the
250 individual unable to obtain or maintain employment.

251 Sec. 6. Section 17b-112e of the general statutes is repealed and the
252 following is substituted in lieu thereof:

253 (a) The Department of Social Services shall provide safety net
254 services for certain families no longer receiving benefits or who are at
255 risk of losing benefits under the temporary family assistance program.
256 Such families include those who are not eligible for six-month
257 extensions of benefits due to: (1) The receipt of two sanctions from the
258 department during the first twenty months of the twenty-one-month
259 time limit of said temporary family assistance program, or (2) the
260 determination by the department that such a family has not made a
261 good-faith effort to seek and maintain employment.

262 (b) Said safety net shall consist of services provided through the
263 existing community service delivery network with additional
264 resources provided by the Department of Social Services. Services shall
265 be provided in-kind or through vendor or voucher payment. Services

266 may include the following: (1) Food, shelter, clothing and employment
267 assistance; (2) eviction prevention; (3) intensive case management; (4)
268 continuous monitoring for child abuse or neglect; [and] (5) for families
269 at risk of losing benefits under the temporary family assistance
270 program, individual performance contracts requiring job training, job
271 searching, volunteer work, participation in parenting programs or
272 counseling or any other requirements deemed necessary by the
273 Commissioner of Social Services; (6) for families at risk of being denied
274 a six-month extension of benefits based on a lack of good-faith effort to
275 seek and maintain employment due to the loss of employment in the
276 twenty-first month of the temporary family assistance program,
277 individual performance contracts as specified in subdivision (5) of this
278 subsection; and (7) for families at risk of being denied a six-month
279 extension of benefits based on a lack of good-faith effort to seek and
280 maintain employment and who have not previously completed an
281 individual performance contract as specified in subdivision (5) of this
282 subsection, individual performance contracts as specified in said
283 subdivision.

284 (c) Families successfully meeting the program requirements
285 established by the individual performance contracts in subdivision (5)
286 of subsection (b) of this section prior to the end of the twenty-one-
287 month time limit shall be considered to have made a good faith effort
288 to comply with the requirements of the program for the purposes of
289 qualifying for a six-month extension, provided they have made a good
290 faith effort to comply with the individual performance contract or have
291 not incurred a sanction subsequent to completing the individual
292 performance contract. Families described in subdivisions (6) and (7) of
293 subsection (b) of this section who have substantially complied with the
294 individual performance contract in subdivision (5) of subsection (b) of
295 this section not later than thirty days after entering into such contract
296 shall be considered to have made a good-faith effort to comply with
297 the requirements of the program for the purposes of qualifying for a
298 six-month extension.

299 (d) The Commissioner of Social Services shall implement policies
300 and procedures necessary for the purposes of this section while in the
301 process of adopting such policies and procedures in regulation form,
302 provided the commissioner prints notice of intention to adopt the
303 regulations in the Connecticut Law Journal within twenty days of
304 implementing such policies and procedures. Final regulations shall be
305 submitted to the legislative regulation review committee no later than
306 November 15, 1997. Policies and procedures implemented pursuant to
307 this subsection shall be valid until the time final regulations are
308 effective.

309 Sec. 7. (a) The joint standing committee of the General Assembly
310 having cognizance of matters relating to human services shall conduct
311 a study to determine the circumstances and prospects of families that
312 formerly received benefits under the temporary family assistance
313 program established under section 17b-112 of the general statutes, as
314 amended by this act. Not later than January 1, 2002, said committee
315 shall submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the
316 General Assembly.

317 (b) The sum of ____ dollars is appropriated to the joint committee
318 on legislative management, from the General Fund, for the fiscal year
319 ending June 30, 2002, for use by the joint standing committee of the
320 General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to human
321 services in conducting the study required by subsection (a) of this
322 section.

323 Sec. 8. This act shall take effect from its passage, except that section
324 7 shall take effect July 1, 2001, and sections 2 to 6, inclusive, shall take
325 effect October 1, 2001.

APP *Joint Favorable Subst.*

The following fiscal impact statement and bill analysis are prepared for the benefit of members of the General Assembly, solely for the purpose of information, summarization, and explanation, and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either House thereof for any purpose:

OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact: See Explanation Below

Affected Agencies: Department of Social Services, Legislative Management

Municipal Impact: None

Explanation

State Impact:

Section 1 requires the council established to monitor the Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) program to review current Department of Social Services (DSS) application forms and submit its findings and recommendation to the General Assembly. It is expected that the agencies involved in the council can fulfill this requirement within their anticipated budgetary resources.

Sections 2 and 3 of the bill increase the circumstances under which DSS must hold expedited fair hearings. This change may result in increased costs to DSS if the department must hire additional administrative hearing officers to accommodate any additional cases. If the department does not need to hire additional officers, it is likely that delays in fair hearings for those cases that are not eligible for expedited hearings may result, as the department would have to dedicate administrative resources to accommodate the increase in the

expedited fair hearing caseload.

Sections 4 through 6 of the bill implement various changes that make it easier for certain TFA families to meet program requirements and continue to receive benefits. As it is not known how many cases would be able to continue to receive benefits due to these sections, the fiscal impact cannot be determined. During FY00, a total of 23,296 cases left the TFA program for reasons other than voluntary closure or having income over the allowed limits. Based on the FY00 average monthly payment of \$454, the total annual cost of these cases that left the TFA program would be \$126.9 million. Therefore, if the provisions included in these sections succeed in continuing benefits to even a fraction of these cases, a significant cost to the state would result.

Section 7 requires the Human Services Committee to conduct a study regarding the TFA program. The bill does not specify the amount to be appropriated to the Joint Committee on Legislative Management for the purpose of conducting this study. sHB 6668 (the Appropriations Act, as favorably reported by the Appropriations Committee) does not include additional funding for this study. To the extent that the Human Services Committee does not contract out for this study and conducts it within the members and staff, then a potential minimal cost may result due to mileage reimbursement to legislators. Currently, legislators are reimbursed 34.5 cents per mile. Considering that legislators may be traveling to the Capitol on other legislative business, any additional cost due to an increased number of reimbursed trips could be handled within the anticipated budgetary resources of the department. In addition, as a result of the increased responsibility to the legislative administrative staff assigned to this study, a reallocation of workload may result.

OLR BILL ANALYSIS

sHB 6939

AN ACT PROMOTING ADMINISTRATIVE EFFICIENCY IN ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS FUNDED OR ADMINISTERED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES.

SUMMARY:

This bill:

1. expands the subject matter of expedited Department of Social Services (DSS) hearings and gives DSS more time to provide notice of, hear, and decide all expedited cases;
2. makes lack of available safe and adequate child care and DSS's inability to guarantee payment for child care reasons to excuse families receiving time-limited Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) benefits from required work activities;
3. makes more TFA families eligible to receive six-month extensions beyond the 21-month time limit on benefits and affords them additional opportunities for reviews and hearings on denials;
4. gives certain TFA families at risk of being denied a six-month extension an opportunity to gain the extension by completing an individual performance contract;
5. requires (a) the Human Services Committee to conduct a study to determine former TFA recipients' current circumstances and prospects and (b) the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) Council, in conjunction with DSS, to review application forms for DSS-funded assistance programs for which a TFA recipient may be eligible and make recommendations for streamlining or consolidating them; and
6. makes technical changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage for the TANF council's review of applications; July 1, 2001 for the Human Services Committee study; and October 1, 2001 for the provisions concerning (1) hearings on unmet, urgent needs; (2) lack of child care; and (3) six-month extensions for families at risk of losing benefits.

DSS APPEALS FOR DENIALS OF URGENT, UNMET NEEDS

By law, DSS must hold a hearing on denial of emergency housing within four days after receiving a request from an aggrieved party and after at least one day's prior notice. All other hearings are held within 30 days after the request and with at least 10 days notice.

The bill expands the types of cases that DSS must hear at the expedited hearings to include all urgent, unmet needs. But it (1) delays the time for all expedited hearings from four to seven days after the request and (2) extends the notice requirement from one to three days and the time for rendering a decision from three to seven days. (After an ordinary hearing, the commissioner has 60 days to render a final decision.)

The bill defines "urgent, unmet need" as including not only a denial of or failure to provide emergency housing, but also a denial of or failure to:

1. provide food stamps where the household meets the criteria for expedited processing;
2. process a cash assistance application under the TFA program, including extensions;
3. process a medical assistance application; or
4. provide medical service in a timely manner.

In effect, the bill speeds up the timetable for these four categories, because it removes them from the regular hearing category and places them in the expedited category.

CHILD CARE EXEMPTIONS

The DSS commissioner may offer TFA for up to 21 months. People who get these time-limited benefits must participate in work activity.

The bill requires DSS to excuse a family subject to time-limited benefits from a required work activity if it makes a good cause finding that circumstances beyond the family's control prevent it from complying. Under the bill, unavailable or inaccessible safe and adequate child care and DSS's or its contractor's inability to guarantee payment for child care are examples of circumstances beyond the family's control. DSS policy currently allows an exemption for situations where appropriate child care is not available within a reasonable distance from the person's home or work site. Appropriate child care means care that meets specified health and safety standards (DSS Uniform Policy Manual § 8530.60).

SIX-MONTH TFA EXTENSIONS

Current law allows families subject to the 21-month time-limited benefits to petition the DSS commissioner for six-month extensions. The commissioner must grant such an extension if a family (1) has made a good faith effort to comply with the work requirement and, despite the effort, has a total family income below the cash assistance payment or (2) has encountered circumstances preventing employment, such as domestic violence, physical harm to the family's children, or other matters beyond the family's control.

The bill makes an otherwise ineligible family eligible for a six-month extension if the relative responsible for the children's care is required to work and has earned at least \$500 in any three-month period since being dropped from the program.

The bill also allows a family that is ineligible for such extensions because it has received sanctions or a determination that it has not made a good faith effort, if it did not previously appeal the sanctions or determination, to request the commissioner to review them. The commissioner must conduct the review and notify the family, in writing, of any findings within 30 days of receiving the request. If the commissioner overturns the sanctions or determination after the review, the family must receive the extension if it is otherwise eligible.

If the commissioner upholds the sanctions or determination, the bill allows the family to request a hearing.

INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE CONTRACTS

DSS must currently provide "safety net" services for certain families no longer receiving TFA benefits or who are at risk of losing their benefits. One of the services for families at risk of losing their benefits is an individual performance contract requiring job training, job searching, volunteer work, parenting program participation, counseling, or any other requirements the commissioner deems necessary. The bill extends the opportunity for individual performance contracts to:

1. families at risk of being denied a six-month extension because they lost their jobs in the 21st month of receiving benefits and
2. other families at risk of being denied the extension based on a lack of good faith effort if they have not previously completed such an individual performance contract.

Under the bill, families in these two categories who comply substantially with their individual performance contracts within 30 days after entering into them must be considered to have made a good faith effort for purposes of qualifying for the six-month extension.

STUDIES

The bill requires the Human Services Committee to conduct a study to determine the circumstances and prospects of families that formerly received TFA benefits. The committee must submit its findings and recommendations to the General Assembly by January 1, 2002. The bill appropriates an unspecified amount from the General Fund to the Legislative Management Committee for FY 2001-02 for the study.

The bill also requires the state's TANF Council, in conjunction with DSS, to (1) review the application forms for all wholly or partially DSS-funded assistance programs for which a TFA recipient may be eligible and (2) make recommendations to streamline or consolidate such application forms. It requires the council to submit a report, by February 1, 2002, on its findings and recommendations to the Human

Services Committee.

BACKGROUND

TFA and TANF

The state’s Jobs First program provides cash assistance through TFA and medical services through Medicaid to needy families with children. The program also promotes job preparation and work. Eligibility is based on a number of factors such as family income, assets, and age of the children. Individuals receive assistance with child care, transportation, and employment. The program has a general 21-month time limit on cash assistance, with certain exemptions, and requires participants to engage in job search and certain job training activities in the Department of Labor’s Employment Services program.

Federal TANF block grants, established under the federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, partially fund the state’s TFA program.

Legislative History

On May 2, the House referred the bill (File 383) to the Appropriations Committee, which, on May 7, deleted sections that would have (1) created a state-earned income tax credit for lower-income working people equal to 10% of their federal earned income tax credit and (2) required the DSS commissioner to designate an unspecified percentage of the state's TANF block grant money to fund the credit.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Human Services Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute
Yea 12 Nay 5

Appropriations Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 23 Nay 13