

SENATE HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 159

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MAY 2, 1996

The Senate Human Services Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 159 with committee amendments. As amended by committee, this bill requires that an aid to families with dependent children (AFDC) applicant or recipient furnish the following information as a condition of that person's and that person's dependent child's eligibility for AFDC benefits: the name of the dependent child's other parent, and that parent's social security number, if known, or the last known address of that parent's place of employment, and any additional information that may assist in identifying or locating the other parent as determined by the Commissioner of Human Services.

It should be noted that this bill does not affect the eligibility of an AFDC applicant's or recipient's child for Medicaid or food stamps. In addition, the bill provides that if an AFDC applicant or recipient were denied AFDC benefits under the provisions of this bill, the applicant's or recipient's child would still be eligible for child care benefits under the "Family Development Act," P.L.1991, c.523 (C.44:10-19 et seq.) on the same basis as the children of AFDC recipients who are participating in the Family Development Initiative established under that law.

The bill provides that the Commissioner of Human Services shall exempt from the requirement of identifying the dependent child's other parent an AFDC applicant or recipient who, in the determination of the commissioner, is unable to supply the required information, or who the commissioner determines has an acceptable reason for refusing to supply the information, including, but not limited to, evidence that the other parent poses a threat to the physical safety of the applicant or recipient and the applicant's or recipient's dependent child, or has physically or sexually abused the applicant or recipient, or the applicant's or recipient's dependent child.

The bill further provides that an AFDC recipient shall be requested to furnish the information required under the bill, if the recipient has not already done so, at the time of that person's redetermination of eligibility for benefits.

The provisions of this bill build upon the State's commitment to strengthen and support families under the Family Development Initiative established pursuant to P.L.1991, c.523. The bill will reduce the incentive for teenagers to have babies in order to qualify for AFDC benefits and encourage them to wait until they are emotionally and financially capable of caring for an infant.

This bill is not intended to be punitive in nature, but rather to force fathers to assume moral and legal, as well as financial, responsibility for their children. The bill should enhance child support collections from delinquent obligors and expedite paternity establishment.

This bill is part of a legislative package that is designed to build upon the AFDC reform initiatives enacted into law during the 1990-91 legislative session, in order to effect further significant reforms in that program that will strengthen families, restore the dignity and hope of AFDC recipients, encourage them to exercise personal responsibility, and facilitate the efforts of these persons to escape the bonds of welfare dependency and achieve economic independence.

The committee adopted amendments to provide that the social security number of the dependent child's other parent be furnished, if known.

This bill was pre-filed for introduction in the 1996-97 session pending technical review. As reported, this bill includes the changes required by technical review which has been performed.