

Alaska State Legislature

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Sponsor Statement House Bill 68 Welfare Child Support Requirements

HB68, requires Alaskans to make good faith efforts toward providing child support as a requirement to maintain eligibility for food stamps. HB68 will encourage cooperation and compliance with child support orders to ensure low-income children receive the support they are owed and deserve. Although 9,000 single-parent Alaskan families rely on food stamps, just one in four are receiving child support payments of any kind. That leaves thousands of low-income children receiving no financial help from their non-custodial parents.

But research shows that child support is one of the strongest tools available to lift kids in single-parent families out of poverty. When actually paid, child support has a profound impact – raising income by an average of 50 percent or more for low-income families on food stamps. That extra money means they need less help from the government and makes it easier for families to escape poverty and dependency.

This bill attempts to address these issues. Its provisions are simple. Non-custodial parents receiving food stamps must cooperate with the state and make court-ordered child support payments as agreed. Custodial parents cannot obstruct the state as it works to establish paternity or track down an absent parent. The bill provides exemptions for good cause – such as for custodial parents who are victims of domestic violence or if such an arrangement would not be in the best interest of the child.

When other states have instituted these reforms, compliance with child support orders increased, helping children get critically needed support from their parents. This has helped families regain independence and reduce the need for government assistance. Based on those experiences, families in Alaska could see a total increase in child support payments of \$500,000 per year.

Child support, when received regularly, greatly reduces the strain and stress on single-parent families. It helps to provide school supplies, clothing, and pay the bills on time. Not only does it meet these practical basic needs of children, it also eases the need for government assistance and alleviates associated taxpayer burdens. Passing HB68 makes sense for Alaskan families. We owe it to the vulnerable children in our state to pass this reform. It protects their needs and serves the best interests of our constituents. I ask for your full support in passing this commonsense approach to improving how we administer the food stamp program.