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SENATE

{ REPORT
No. 491

PROVIDE HOME CARE FOR DEPENDENT CHILDREN IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

MARCH 27, 1926.—Ordered to be printed

MR. CAPPER, from the Committee on the District of Columbia, submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany H. R. 7669]

The Committee on the District of Columbia, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 7669) to provide home care for dependent children in the District of Columbia, having considered the same, report favorably thereon with the recommendation that the bill do pass with the following amendments:

Insert the words "in the District of Columbia" in the title, page 1, following the word "children."

Strike out all of lines 3 to 12, both inclusive, page 1, and all of lines 1 to 20, both inclusive, page 2.

Line 21, page 2, strike out the figure "2" and insert in lieu thereof the figure "1."

Line 24, page 2, insert after the word "board" the words "of Public Welfare of the District of Columbia, hereinafter called the board."

Line 5, page 3, strike out the figure "3" and insert the figure "2."

Line 22, page 3, strike out the figure "4" and insert the figure "3."

Line 11, page 4, strike out the figure "5" and insert the figure "4."

Line 22, page 4, strike out the figure "6" and insert the figure "5."

Line 3, page 5, strike out the figure "7" and insert the figure "6."

Line 8, page 5, strike out the figure "8" and insert the figure "7."

Line 11, page 5, strike out the figure "9" and insert the figure "8."

Line 19, page 5, strike out the figures "10" and insert the figure "9."

Line 21, page 5, strike out the figures "11" and insert the figures "10."

Line 6, page 6, strike out the words "a secretary."

PURPOSE OF AMENDMENTS

As amended, the bill will conform to the bill (S. 1929) previously reported and covered by Report No. 187, except that the Congress having in the meantime enacted the bill (S. 1430) to establish a board of public welfare in the District of Columbia and abolishing the Board of Charities referred to in the bill (S. 1929), the duty of administering aid to dependent children is shifted from the defunct Board of Charities to the newly created Board of Public Welfare.

Section 1 of the bill as passed by the House, which created a new "mothers' aid board" to administer the act, has been stricken out in toto, for the reason that Congress has already recognized the wisdom and necessity of consolidation of the numerous boards rendering public welfare service, by its enactment of the Public Welfare Board bill. Summed up, there is no practical difference between the bill (S. 1929) previously reported favorably and the present bill (H. R. 7669) as it passed the House, except as to the body or organization which shall administer the aid authorized. Therefore, the committee has amended the bill (H. R. 7669) to conform to the bill (S. 1929), so that no new board or administrative agency will be set up in opposition to the previously expressed policy of Congress.

SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF BILL

In his message at the beginning of the first session of the Sixty-ninth Congress, the President called attention to the fact that although more than 40 States have enacted measures in aid of motherhood, the District of Columbia is still without such a law. The purpose of each of the three bills heretofore mentioned and referred to this committee is to supply financial aid to destitute mothers with dependent children, so that such children need not become inmates of public charitable institutions but may have the benefit of home care.

To those who have given any study at all to the problem, it is clear that it is to the public interest in most cases, where a mother is unable to support her child that the State or municipal government should render reasonable assistance to keep the home intact, rather than commit the child to a public institution at equal or greater cost. The child is benefited and the public interest served by preventing poverty from disrupting the basis of all civilization—the family home.

The provisions of the amended bill (H. R. 7669) hereby reported are in substance as follows: That whenever the parent of a child under the age of 16 years is unable to provide for the proper care of such child in his own home, the mother of the child may apply for assistance to the Board of Public Welfare of the District of Columbia, provided she has been a bona fide resident of the District for not less than a year, and is a citizen of the United States or has made application to become a citizen. The board then will determine by investigation whether the mother is a proper person to have the care and custody of the child, whether the home conditions are proper, what other resources may be available for support of the child, whether the father, if living, is capable of or can be compelled to furnish support, and what amount of aid is needed. The bill further provides for monthly allowances for not more than six months with-

out further review of the case. Visitation of the homes is also provided for and punishment by fine or imprisonment for fraud. The bill further authorizes an appropriation of \$100,000 wholly from the revenues of the District of Columbia for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1927, the Bureau of the Budget having advised that this is in accord with the financial program of the President.

The bill reported, as amended, was prepared after long and careful study by the Commission of Public Welfare Legislation, a representative body of public spirited citizens of the District of Columbia, appointed by the District Commissioners and serving without compensation. They had the assistance in the preparation of the bill of an expert of the Russell Sage Foundation. The bill, as amended, has been approved by practically every civic and charitable organization of the District as meeting the needs and conditions existing in the District.

METHOD OF ADMINISTRATION

The bill reported has been amended to provide for administration by the Board of Public Welfare, while originally it set up a new board, to be appointed by the Commissioners of the District of Columbia. The advocates of the bill in its original form contend that the problem of mothers' aid is so different from other public welfare activities that it should be entirely separated from them in the administration of the proposed legislation. They particularly object to the inclusion of the mothers' aid work under the jurisdiction of the Board of Public Welfare, contending that it will carry the "stigma of charity," and so be obnoxious to mothers in need of assistance and will tend to limit the usefulness of the plan devised.

On this point the committee has conducted extensive hearings, affording full opportunity for the expression of opinion by all interested persons and organizations. The committee has given the most careful and impartial consideration to this phase of the subject. As a result, the committee is convinced that the method of administration proposed in the bill reported, as amended—that is, by the Board of Public Welfare—is preferable to the establishment of a separate board. Your committee regards the mothers' aid bill as only one phase of the entire problem of public welfare legislation and administration. The committee already has reported favorably the bill (S. 1430) to combine all existing public welfare agencies under the jurisdiction of a single board of public welfare, to be composed of nine citizens of the District, and that bill is now law.

The President of the United States, in a message to Congress last year, said:

The welfare work of the District of Columbia is administered by several different boards dealing with charities and various correctional efforts. It would be an improvement if this work were consolidated and placed under the direction of a single commission.

The committee in its favorable report on the bill to consolidate the public-welfare agencies of the District has given substantial reasons for the centralization of control and management. Attention is invited to that report, No. 185, the recommendations of which have already been enacted into law. The committee feels that there is no more necessity for now setting up a separate board for the admin-

istration of mother's aid legislation than for other public-welfare functions, such as the care of orphans, the aged, or the indigent sick.

By centralization and coordination of all governmental public-welfare agencies of the District more effective work can be accomplished at a lesser cost, in the opinion of those who have carefully studied the local situation, and Congress will no longer be required to separately consider and provide for the needs of multifarious boards and commissions, each operating without regard to the work of the others.

The committee's conclusions on this point are based purely upon conditions in the District of Columbia, which are distinct and entirely different than those prevailing in many cities and States. Nothing said in this report, therefore, should be construed either as in derogation or support of separate administration of mother's aid laws in other jurisdictions. It is only fair to call attention to the fact that in some States the administration of mother's aid legislation is entirely divorced from other forms of public welfare work.

Forty-two States already provide aid to indigent mothers of dependent children, and there has been no opposition whatever to the basic principle of the similar legislation proposed for the District of Columbia. On the contrary, there is a very strong demand from the citizens of the District, through their civic organizations and social agencies, for a law giving recognition to the fact that it is a public duty—to be met through the regular channels of taxation rather than private charity—to afford every child, no matter what the unfortunate circumstances of the parents, full opportunity for physical, mental, and moral development in home and family environment instead of in a public institution utterly devoid of proper parental influence.

There are appended hereto and made a part of this report letters dated December 19 and 29, 1925, from the Board of Commissioners of the District of Columbia recommending the passage of the bill, as amended, hereby reported.

WASHINGTON, December 19, 1925.

HON. ARTHUR CAPPER,

Chairman Committee on the District of Columbia,

United States Senate, Washington, D. C.

SIR: The Commissioners of the District of Columbia have the honor to inclose herewith draft of a bill entitled "A bill to provide home care for dependent children," and to request its introduction and enactment.

The bill provides that the mother of a child or children under the age of 16 years, who is unable to afford proper care in the home, may receive public aid and assistance, provided she has been a bona fide resident of the District of Columbia for one year preceding her application, and provided also that she is a citizen of the United States, or has made application to become a citizen. It must appear that she is a proper person to have the custody of the child, and that her home is a satisfactory place for its training and rearing. The bill requires careful inquiry into the resources of the mother to determine whether she is able in any measure to assist in the care of the child. If the father of the child is living and willfully refuses to support it, it must appear that the mother has taken legal steps to compel such support.

The administration of this bill is lodged in the Board of Charities. The board is required to investigate each case carefully and to provide adequate supervision for each family that is given aid. The assistance is withdrawn whenever the mother ceases to be a resident of the District of Columbia.

The bill calls for the authorization of an appropriation of \$100,000, which is to cover both the administration of the act and the aid which it provides, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1927, and requires the commissioners annually thereafter to include an estimate in their budget for this purpose. The amount specified was determined after a consideration of the amounts expended for this purpose by other cities which are comparable in size to the District of Columbia. It is estimated that the administration of the act in the first year will cost about \$12,000, and the bill provides that salaries shall be fixed in accordance with the terms of the classification act of 1923.

The proposed measure has been submitted to the Bureau of the Budget, and the commissioners are advised that it will be in accord with the financial program of the President.

Very truly yours,

THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA,
By CUNO H. RUDOLPH, *President*.

WASHINGTON, December 29, 1925.

Hon. ARTHUR CAPPER,
*Chairman Committee on the District of Columbia,
United States Senate.*

SIR: The Commissioners of the District of Columbia have the honor to submit the following on Senate bill 120, Sixty-ninth Congress, first session, entitled, "A bill to establish in the District of Columbia a board of mothers' assistance in aid of destitute mothers and making appropriation therefor," which you referred to them for report.

On December 19, 1925, the commissioners submitted to you draft of a bill entitled, "A bill to provide home care for dependent children," which covers the same subject matter as this bill. The commissioners believe that the bill submitted by them, which was prepared by the commission on public welfare of the District of Columbia, is preferable to Senate bill 120. They therefore recommend that it be substituted for Senate bill 120.

Very respectfully,

THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA,
By CUNO H. RUDOLPH, *President*.

