

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5382

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, FEBRUARY 14, 1991

Brief Description: Changing provisions in the early childhood education and assistance program.

SPONSORS: Senators Rinehart, Bailey, Erwin, Murray, A. Smith, Talmadge, Pelz, L. Kreidler, Bauer, Stratton, Wojahn, Rasmussen and Skratek.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5382 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Bailey, Chairman; Erwin, Vice Chairman; Murray, Pelz, Rinehart, A. Smith, and Talmadge.

Staff: Leslie Goldstein (786-7424)

Hearing Dates: February 5, 1991; February 14, 1991

BACKGROUND:

The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) was adopted in 1985. ECEAP provides services to four-year old children who, without special assistance, would be at-risk of failure when commencing formal education. Eligibility is based on the requirement that the family income be at or below 100 percent of poverty guidelines. ECEAP is a comprehensive program including the following four components: education, health services, social services, and parental involvement.

Currently, a longitudinal study is being conducted in Washington to assess the effectiveness of preschool education and assistance services for at-risk children. National studies have been conducted that support the proposition that early intervention programs are a positive approach to breaking the cycle of poverty and helping students succeed in school.

The number of children served has grown from 1,000 children in 1986 to approximately 5,098 in the 1990-91 program year. The federal early intervention program, Head Start, serves 6,497 four-year old children. Head Start expects to serve an additional 580 four-year olds with a recently granted expansion. This leaves 2,713 eligible children (18 percent) unserved by Head Start or ECEAP.

SUMMARY:

The Legislature emphasizes its intent to provide the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) to all eligible children not served by a comparable federal program. The limit on serving 5,000 children is removed. The requirement that priority be given to groups which include a high percentage of at-risk families is deleted since the intent is to fully fund the program.

EFFECT OF PROPOSED SUBSTITUTE:

The appropriation is reduced from \$16 million to \$14 million. The purpose of the appropriation is to increase the number of children served in the program.

Appropriation: \$14,000,000

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: requested

TESTIMONY FOR:

This program has been shown to be very effective. Investment in our children is one of the best ways of preventing these children from being the welfare recipients of tomorrow. A key component of the program is parental involvement. Small class size and teacher training are also important components of the program.

Parents testifying about the program stated that it was an example of a governmental program designed to meet their needs and provide real opportunities, not false incentives.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: PRO: Peggy Jo Mihata, Department of Community Development; Dorothy Hollingsworth, ECEAP Advisory Committee; Tom Dooley, Association of Washington Principals; Marty Bishop, ECEAP, Puget Sound Educational Service District; Brenda Bacon, ECEAP parent, Puget Sound Educational Service District; Connie Sprieleman, ECEAP parent, Puget Sound Educational Service District; Margaret Casey, Children's Budget Coalition; Fay Page, Washington State Parent Teacher Association