

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2447

As Amended by Senate

Title: An act relating to clarifying the statutory language governing the early childhood education and assistance program.

Brief Description: Modifying the early childhood education and assistance program.

Sponsors: Representatives Roland, Brough, Dorn, Thibaudeau and Patterson; by request of Department of Community Development.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Education, January 28, 1994, DP;
Passed House, February 9, 1994, 95-0;
Amended by Senate.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 17 members: Representatives Dorn, Chair; Cothorn, Vice Chair; Brough, Ranking Minority Member; B. Thomas, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Brumsickle; Carlson; G. Cole; Eide; Hansen; Holm; Jones; Karahalios; J. Kohl; Patterson; Pruitt; Roland and L. Thomas.

Staff: Robert Butts (786-7111).

Background: The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), established in 1985, provides low income four-year old children with a comprehensive program including education, health, nutrition, parental involvement and social services. The purpose of the program is to give the children the skills they need to succeed in school. The program began serving 1,000 children in 1986 and currently serves approximately 6,092 children a year. A longitudinal study is being conducted to measure the effectiveness of the program. The program is administered by the Department of Community Development.

Summary of Bill: A number of changes are made to the statutes governing ECEAP to reflect changes in and growth of the program since 1985.

The term "preschool" is changed to "early childhood."

References to the federal Head Start program's rules for defining eligibility, needs assessment or program standards, including parent involvement, are deleted. State standards are more clearly specified.

An "eligible child" is defined as a child under five years of age and living at 100 percent of the federal poverty level. Priority must be given to children from families with the lowest income or to eligible children of families with multiple needs.

Program standards for parental involvement are more clearly specified and include participation with the child's program, in local policy decisions, in developing and revising service delivery systems, and in parent education and training.

The department is given specific authority to contract for services with public or private nonsectarian organizations including school districts, educational service districts, community and technical colleges, local governments and nonprofit organizations. The reference to requiring the use of existing federal contractors when possible is deleted.

The ECEAP advisory committee is expanded to include representatives of the Department of Health, the state Board for Community and Technical Colleges, the office of child care policy and the medical assistance administration within the Department of Social and Health Services, and professional organizations.

Each approved program is required to conduct needs assessments and identify targeted groups of children. Identification of service needs is not tied to federal Head Start criteria.

Language limiting enrollment in the program to 5,000 children is deleted.

Grants are no longer required to be awarded competitively but will be awarded based on local community needs and demonstrated capacity to provide services.

Reporting requirements are changed. The Governor is no longer required to report on whether or not the program should be continued or expanded. The Governor is required to report on the status of the program, the need for services, and how the needs will be addressed.

The standards for assessing the effectiveness of the program are changed to measure the average level of performance of children in the program with the average level of performance of all state students and with the average level of performance of eligible children who did not participate in the program.

EFFECT OF SENATE AMENDMENT(S): A section changing the membership of the advisory committee was deleted. A definition of "family support services" was added. Several technical changes were made.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This is primarily a technical clean-up. It also strengthens the parent involvement requirements in the program.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Mary Carr, Department of Community Development (supports); and Susan Patrick, Superintendent of Public Instruction (supports).

VOTE ON FINAL PASSAGE:

Yeas 95; Excused 3

Excused: Representatives Chandler, Edmondson, Reams