

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1935

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Education, March 31, 1999

Title: An act relating to eligibility for early childhood assistance programs.

Brief Description: Adjusting eligibility for early childhood assistance programs.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Tokuda, Boldt, Ogden, Schual-Berke, Lovick, Kessler, Kenney, Rockefeller, Murray, Scott, Edmonds, Conway, Kagi, Santos, Poulsen, Veloria and Lantz).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Education: 3/29/99, 3/31/99 [DPA, DNPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Eide, Vice Chair; Bauer, Brown, Goings, Kohl-Welles, Rasmussen and Swecker.

Minority Report: Do not pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Finkbeiner, Hochstatter and Sellar.

Staff: William Bridges (786-7424)

Background: The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) is a voluntary preschool program that prepares economically disadvantaged children to enter grade school. The program is targeted to four-year-old children whose family incomes are at or below 100 percent of the federal poverty level. Eligible children may be admitted to approved ECEAP programs only to the extent that the Legislature provides funds.

The Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development (CTED) administers the ECEAP program through grants to local contractors such as school districts, educational service districts, local governments, nonprofit organizations, child-care providers, community colleges, and tribes. According to CTED, about \$60 million from the general fund has been appropriated for ECEAP purposes for 1997-99. There are currently 292 program sites statewide, providing educational, social, health, and nutritional services to more than 7,000 children.

Summary of Amended Bill: The family-income requirement is changed to 130 percent of the federal poverty level.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: The family-income requirement is changed to 130 percent of the federal poverty level.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available on original bill.

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

Testimony For: The success of welfare reform has increased the income level of many economically disadvantaged families, making them ineligible to participate in ECEAP. But these same families still need ECEAP services. ECEAP providers are having to turn away these families, which leaves unfilled program slots. By changing the eligibility rate, some of the vacant slots can be filled.

There is agreement that changing the eligibility rate is good, but the change should be accompanied by strict accountability. Currently, some providers are mismanaged, not responsive to parental concerns, and do not have active outreach programs to find eligible families. Furthermore, providers are able to evaluate themselves with little oversight by CTED. These problems should be addressed in an amendment to this bill.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Representative Kip Tokuda, prime sponsor; Dana Brenner, WA State Assn. of Head Start & ECEAP; Gina Clift, ECEAP Policy Council parent (with concerns); Myrna Fiedler, ECEAP parent; Mercedes Hedden, Pierce County Community Services ECEAP; Stu Jacobson, WA Parents for Safe Day Care (with concerns); Renita Morrison, WA Parents for Safe Day Care (with concerns).