

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1545

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Children & Family Services

**Title:** An act relating to consolidation of early learning and child care programs and services in the state.

**Brief Description:** Providing for consolidation of early learning and child care programs.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Fromhold, Hinkle, Kagi, Kenney, Schual-Berke, Upthegrove, Chase, Cox, McDermott, Delvin, Cooper, Dickerson, Pettigrew, Hankins, Lantz, Quall, Conway, Rockefeller and Clements.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Children & Family Services: 2/6/03, 2/12/03 [DPS].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Provides for consolidation of early learning and child care programs in the state.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Darneille, Vice Chair; Dickerson, Miloscia and Pettigrew.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Boldt, Ranking Minority Member; Bailey and Shabro.

**Staff:** Cynthia Forland (786-7152).

**Background:**

In 2000 the Legislature directed the Office of Financial Management (OFM) to conduct a study of the best method for coordinating and consolidating child care and early education programs funded by the state. The Child Care and Early Learning Organizational Study, which the OFM produced in response, provided the following recommendations:

- Adopt an umbrella mission statement that captures all child care and early learning programs;
- Combine programs with similar or duplicate functions and missions;
- Streamline the current configuration by reducing the number of state agencies involved in the child care licensing process;
- Assign an interagency task force to examine and reduce the differences in program service standards; and
- Coordinate training for providers regarding state agency rules by all programs.

In response to this report, the Governor's Office undertook administrative action to consolidate child care and early learning programs in the state, the primary component of which was the creation of the Division of Child Care and Early Learning within the Economic Services Administration in the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS).

Currently, child care and early learning programs in the state are administered through three state agencies: The DSHS, the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development, and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).

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**Summary of Substitute Bill:**

The Governor and the Superintendent of Public Instruction (Superintendent) are required to jointly consolidate and administer early learning and child care programs and services in the state by September 1, 2007.

An Early Learning and Care Task Force (Task Force), under the joint authority of the Governor and the Superintendent, is established in the OSPI to oversee the consolidation of early learning and child care programs and services in the state. The Task Force must consist of 17 members as follows: five members recommended by the Child Care Coordinating Committee, jointly appointed by the Governor and the Superintendent; four members appointed by the Governor; four members appointed by the Superintendent; and four members of the Legislature. It is intended that the membership of the Task Force include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Individuals with expertise in the delivery of early learning and child care services in a school setting;
- Individuals with expertise in the delivery of early learning and child care services in both nonprofit and for-profit licensed center and family home child care settings;
- Individuals who deliver early learning and child care programs and services, including representatives of state governmental agencies; and
- Individuals who are parents of children under 13 years of age.

By January 1, 2004, the Task Force is required to report to the Legislature with the plan for consolidation of the following programs and services:

- Child care quality investments administered by the Division of Child Care and Early Learning in the DSHS;
- State Training and Registry System investments;
- Head Start-State Collaboration Project;
- Statewide Child Care Resource and Referral Network;
- Project Even Start;
- Child and Adult Care Food Program;
- Healthy Child Care Washington or its successor program;
- Special education for individuals from three to five years of age; and
- Title 1, Part C Migrant Education Preschool Set-Aside.

By September 1, 2004, to the extent possible within available funds, the Governor and the Superintendent are required to implement the Task Force's plan for consolidation of these programs and services.

By September 1, 2006, the Task Force is required to report to the Legislature with the plan for consolidation of the following programs and services:

- Licensing of child care centers and homes;
- Child care health inspections;
- Child Care Coordinating Committee;
- All programs financed and contracted through the Child Care and Development Fund;
- All child care and early learning activities authorized under chapter 74.13 RCW;
- Working Connections Child Care Program;
- Seasonal child care;
- Teen parents child care;
- Homeless child care;
- Special needs child care;
- Activities funded through Part C of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;
- Child care for inpatient alcohol and substance abuse treatment; and
- Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program.

By September 1, 2007, to the extent possible within available funds, the Governor and the Superintendent are required to implement the Task Force's plan for consolidation of these programs and services.

Additional duties of the Task Force include, but not be limited to, development of the following:

- Consistent aligned standards for children entering school and for early learning and child care programs and services that address the multiple developmental aspects of young children, including cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical;
- An integrated system of staffing and professional development for early learning and child care programs and services;
- Comprehensive, family-focused services to be provided by early learning and child care programs for children and families who need more intensive support;
- An integrated system of collaboration and support between early learning, child care,

- and after-school providers and the K-12 and higher education systems; and
- A plan to address barriers to consolidation, such as issues relating to facilities and transportation.

The Task Force is required to develop a plan for implementation of these items, and by September 1, 2004, report to the Legislature on the implementation plan. The Governor and the Superintendent are required, to the extent possible within available funds, to apply the implementation plan to the consolidated programs and services by September 1, 2005, for the initial consolidation and September 1, 2007, for the second consolidation.

### **Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

The list of early learning and child care programs and services to be consolidated is modified. The specified individuals to be included in the membership of the Task Force are modified. It is specified that the Task Force established in the bill is under the joint authority of the Governor and the Superintendent of Public Instruction. The duties of the Task Force are expanded to include the development of: consistent aligned standards not only for children entering school, but also for early learning and child care programs and services; an integrated system of collaboration and support between early learning, child care, and after-school providers and the K-12 and higher education systems; and a plan to address barriers to consolidation, such as issues relating to facilities and transportation.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested.

**Effective Date of Substitute Bill:** The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

**Testimony For:** (Substitute bill) This consolidation will marshal resources for early learning and child care programs in the state, and prevent this issue from being overlooked. It will create a more efficient administration of those programs. The partnership of the Governor and the OSPI is the logical choice. The date for full consolidation is a long way off, but is sensitive to the players involved. The programs to be consolidated are extraordinarily complex, involving separate sets of law and regulation, as well as distinct computer systems. The approach is unorthodox, but productive. Early learning and child care are essentially linked. This bill ratifies work already underway in the OSPI. This consolidation is the logical next step, following the Governor's previous consolidation efforts. The consolidation will strike a balance between supporting children's achievements and supporting families. The consolidation will be a major step in improving children's readiness to enter kindergarten. There is a silo effect not only in the provision of services, but also in educating providers of services. Staff development is an important element of this consolidation process. This consolidation models the federal No Child Left Behind approach.

(With comments) The consolidation process should involve community providers, and the resulting consolidation must be economically feasible for those providers. The consolidation process must not result in the OSPI fully controlling child care and early learning programs. The standards developed through this process must mesh with K-12 standards. Membership of the Task Force should include representatives of intermediary organizations that support direct service providers. This process must not overlook the diversity of clients. We must remember that no one can take the place of a parent for children from 0 to 4 years of age. The role of parents and parent preparation must be included in this process.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** (In support) Representative Fromhold, prime sponsor; Greg Williamson, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Robin Zukoski, Governor's Office; Carol Taylor Cann, Washington State PTA; Laurie Cornelius, Clark College; and Robbin Dunn and Marty Varela, Washington State Head Start Program and Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program.

(With comments) Deborah Duitch, YMCA of Greater Seattle; Agda Burchard and Elizabeth Bonbright Thompson, Washington State Association for the Education of Young Children; Regnis Singer, Tacoma Head Start; and Kristen Ockert, Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.