
**Children & Family Services
Committee**

HB 1545

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 Summary of Bill

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

Hearing Date: 2/6/03

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.
- 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.

Summary of Bill:

The Governor and the Superintendent of Public Instruction 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 is established to oversee the consolidation of early learning and child care programs and services in the state.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.