

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6466

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education, January 25, 2006

Title: An act relating to a department of early learning.

Brief Description: Creating the department of early learning.

Sponsors: Senators Kohl-Welles, Weinstein, McAuliffe, Delvin, Finkbeiner, Brown, Rasmussen and Kline; by request of Governor Gregoire.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education: 1/18/06, 1/25/06 [DPS-WM, DNP].

Ways and Means: 2/2/06.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING, K-12 & HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6466 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Pridemore, Vice Chair, Higher Education; Weinstein, Vice Chair, Early Learning & K-12; Berkey, Eide, Kohl-Welles, Rasmussen, Rockefeller and Shin.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Schmidt, Ranking Minority Member; Carrell, Delvin, Pflug and Schoesler.

Staff: Ingrid Mungia (786-7423)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Staff: Bryon Moore (786-7726)

Background: Child care and early learning programs in the state are administered through three state agencies: the Department for Social and Health Services (DSHS), the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED), and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). The Division of Child Care and Early Learning (DCCEL) within DSHS licenses child care homes and centers, develops policy and procedures for the state's child care subsidy program, and directs the Head Start-State Collaboration Project. The CTED administers the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), which is the state's preschool program. The OSPI administers services and programs relating to child care and early learning including family literacy programs, special education for children three years of age and older, and the nutrition assistance program for child care. Training and professional development programs for early learning professionals

are available through such sources as the State Training and Registry System and the state's higher education institutions.

In the 2005 session, the Washington Early Learning Council (Council) was established in the Office of the Governor for the purpose of providing vision, leadership, and direction to the improvement, realignment, and expansion of early learning programs and services for children birth to five years of age in order to better meet the early learning needs of children and their families. "Early learning programs and services" were defined to include the following: child care; state, private, and nonprofit preschool programs; child care subsidy programs; and training and professional development programs for early learning professionals. The Council serves as the Advisory Committee on Early Learning to the Comprehensive Education Study Steering Committee created in Engrossed Second Substitute Senate Bill No. 5441 of 2005. The goal of the Council is to build upon existing efforts and recommend to the Governor and the Legislature new initiatives, as necessary, to create an adequately financed high-quality, accessible, and comprehensive early learning system that benefits all young children whose parents choose it.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The Department of Early Learning (Department) is established as a cabinet-level department with a director who is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the Governor. The duties of the Department are to set early learning policy and coordinate, consolidate and integrate child care and early learning programs. The director of the Department will provide leadership in the creation and governance of a non-governmental public-private partnership.

Duties currently within the DSHS and CTED are transferred to the Department of Early Learning. The duties transferred include:

- 1) State employee child care;
- 2) State policy on child care;
- 3) The employer liaison;
- 4) The Child Care Resource and Referral Network;
- 5) The Child Care Career and Wage Ladder;
- 6) The tiered reimbursement pilots; and
- 7) ECEAP.

Child day care licensing responsibilities are transferred from the DSHS to the new Department of Early Learning. Those duties include:

- 1) Designate categories of child care facilities;
- 2) Adopt and publish minimum requirements for licensing in each category of child care facilities;
- 3) Issue, revoke, or deny licenses;
- 4) Develop procedures, the form and contents of necessary reports for the Department and licensee;
- 5) Inspect child care facilities periodically;
- 6) Review requirements adopted by the Department every two years; and
- 7) Consult with public and private agencies to improve methods and facilities for the care and early learning of children.

All powers, duties, and functions of the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and CTED pertaining to ECEAP and the early learning reading initiative are transferred to the Department of Early Learning. All powers, duties, and functions of the Division of Child Care and Early Learning in DSHS pertaining to the Working Connections Child Care program, child licensing, child care quality, and the Head Start collaboration office are transferred to the Department of Early Learning. However, eligibility and payment function for the Working Connections Child Care program are not transferred to the Department. Appropriations and staff associated with all of the programs listed above, except appropriations for DSHS, are transferred to the Department. Appropriations for the programs transferred from DSHS to the Department will be transferred through an interagency agreement.

In collaboration with the Early Learning Council, the Department will make recommendations by November 15, 2006, to the Governor and the appropriate committees of the Legislature, regarding:

- 1) Coordination and collaboration with K-12 and other programs at state and local levels;
- 2) Ways the Department will encourage local and community public-private partnerships;
- 3) The relationship between the Department and the statewide public-private partnership;
- 4) Internal departmental governance; and
- 5) Transition of any additional programs and responsibilities to the Department.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: Amended bill adds language requiring the appointment of the Director of the Early Learning Department be confirmed by the Senate.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Received on January 23, 2006.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For: This is one of the most important issues in the state. This bill allows us to consolidate our early learning programs into a single agency to prepare our children for success in kindergarten and then success in life. The research is clear; 90 percent of human brain development happens in the first five years of life. The gap in academic achievement could be closed if all of our children are allowed a better opportunity at early learning. When parents need

help themselves or need help for their children outside of the home, we need to make sure they get the best quality care in early learning opportunities possible. ECEAP and Head Start are both very successful programs, but without the coordination, single focus and vision, the state has fallen behind the rest of the nation and are less effective. We need to ensure every child is ready to learn by the time she or he gets to kindergarten. With the creation of the public-private partnership, we will see a huge return with respect to children and their ability to succeed. Private organizations need a true public partner without going through the maze of multiple agencies if they are going to have an effective public-private partnership. A strong single agency would be the focal point for better coordination and better communication between the world of early learning and the K-12 system. Focusing resources on the first five years of life have a dramatic impact. Creating a new department will not create another

bureaucratic silo, but instead will allow greater efficiencies through consolidation of existing early learning services into one focused department. It is difficult to navigate through the different services provided through different departments. The state must develop a cohesive, focused system supporting young children, their parents, and individuals who care for them on a daily basis. We have to provide the tools necessary for our kids to grow. The areas that need to be broadly supported in early learning are good communication, adequate funding, and information to assist parents in selecting and accessing quality care and assisting providers who give early learning care. The state's efforts for early learning are scattered between three departments, each of which has its own mission and vision that are tangentially connected to a high quality learning environment for children and their parents. We owe it to our children to organize ourselves for their success. There is an enormous gap between what is available and what parents want and need. The creation of one entity will be a benefit for providers to help families access the traditional systems. This department should not be another regulatory agency. Early experience helps determine a happy and productive life. Families are working very hard but are unable to access the resources they need for their children. The bill streamlines a historically fractured system of early learning, increases attention and investment to the system, and brings attention to the inequities of children of color in the education system. Moving the Working Connection Child Care system to the new department should be encouraged. Full day kindergarten should be fully funded. The new department is necessary for innovations and efficiencies that all parents need. We need a system where criminal background checks are conducted before a child care provider is hired. We need a toll-free number not answered by a machine in DSHS. This department is the right thing to do and the right time to do it. The patchwork quilt is a problem. Creating a department of early learning will elevate the importance of early learning a move toward positive outcomes for children. This is important to do to improve the health of Washington State. We need strategically invested resources to get kids ready for life.

Testimony Against: None.

Testimony Other: The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is interested in investing in early learning based on research. The Foundation is looking at a 90 million dollar investment over the next decade to try and improve the quality in early learning. The Foundation is very concerned about the school readiness gap in this state.

Who Testified: PRO: Senator Kohl-Welles, prime sponsor; Governor Gregoire, State of Washington; Bob Watt, Boeing; Daniel Kranzler, MFORMA; Jeanne Anderson, Foundation for Early Learning; Angie Hicks Maxie, Tiny Tots Development Center; Sally Prichard, United Way Spokane; Alayne Sulkin, Parent Map; Alaric Bien, Families, Friends, Neighbor providers; Jada Rupley, ESD Vancouver; Sarah Cherin, Children's Alliance; Jill Sells, WA American Chapter Academy of Pediatrics; John Burbank, Economic Opportunity Institution; Randi Abrams, SEIU local 925; Margy Miller, NWESD 189; Evelyn Lemoine, United Way of King County; Nikki Guel, Wa Parents for Safe Childcare; Lisa Macfarlane, League of Education Voters; Agda Burchard, WAEYC & The Collaborative; Dan Sloma, WA Health Foundation; Larry Macmillan, citizen.

OTHER: Greg Shaw, Gates Foundation; Terry Mersman, Talaris.