
**Early Learning & Children's
Services Committee**

HB 3168

Brief Description: Regarding the creation of the Washington head start program.

Sponsors: Representatives Goodman, Kagi, Walsh, Haler, Roberts, Pettigrew, Hinkle, Sullivan, Kessler, Green, Hudgins, Darneille, McIntire, Lias, Kelley, Kenney, Hankins, Nelson, Santos and Ormsby.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Department of Early Learning (DEL) to develop a plan to implement a statewide Washington Head Start Program.

Hearing Date: 1/29/08

Staff: Brian Considine (786-7290).

Background:

In 2006 the Legislature created the Department of Early Learning (DEL) as an executive branch agency. The primary duties of the DEL are to implement early learning policy and to coordinate, consolidate, and integrate child care and early learning programs in order to administer programs and funds efficiently.

Washington offers two free early learning programs to preschoolers - Head Start and the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP). Head Start is a federally-funded program serving about 18,000 children ages three to five years from low-income families. Funding for Head Start is 80 percent federal with a 20 percent local match. The ECEAP is a state-funded preschool program serving about 6,000 children per year. Public or private organizations receive direct funding from the state through a grant process and may then contract with organizations to offer services. The ECEAP-funded programs are offered in settings such as public schools, child care centers, community organizations, and Head Start agencies.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The ECEAP serves primarily four-year-olds. Three-year-olds may be served after all eligible four-year-old applicants have been enrolled. Eligible families for the ECEAP are those at or below 110 percent of the federal poverty level, although up to 10 percent of program slots may be offered to over-income families with developmental or environmental risk factors. Space is also reserved to meet the needs of preschool children of migrant workers or Native Americans.

The ECEAP is composed of four interactive components: education, health and nutrition, parent involvement, and family support. It is a community-based, family-focused, comprehensive, pre-kindergarten program designed to help children and their families who are in poverty. The program focuses on helping three- and four-year-olds prepare for and succeed in school while helping their parents progress toward self-sufficiency.

Summary of Bill:

The Legislature finds that the ECEAP has served an important role, but its performance standards should be aligned with the federal Head Start program. The DEL must develop a plan to implement a statewide Washington Head Start Program. In doing so, the Department will identify:

- federal Head Start guidelines, performance standards and measures;
- additional resources needed to meet federal guidelines and standards;
- changes to Washington ECEAP statutes necessary to implement a Washington Head Start program; and
- current programs in Washington offering full-day, year-round children's services.

The DEL will submit a report to the Governor and Legislature by December 1, 2008, with recommendations for implementing a state-supported pilot program modeled on the federal Head Start program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.