

SENATE BILL REPORT

E2SSB 5828

As Amended by House, April 6, 2007

Title: An act relating to early child development and learning.

Brief Description: Regarding early child development and learning.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Kauffman, McAuliffe, Tom, Rasmussen, Eide, Oemig, Clements, Hobbs, Weinstein, Rockefeller, Kline and Kohl-Welles).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/07/07, 2/22/07 [DPS].

Ways & Means: 2/26/07, 3/05/07 [DP2S].

Passed Senate: 3/09/07, 47-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5828 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Tom, Vice Chair; Holmquist, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Clements, Eide, Hewitt, Hobbs, Kauffman, Oemig, Rasmussen, Weinstein and Zarelli.

Staff: Kimberly Cushing (786-7421)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Second Substitute Senate Bill No. 5828 be substituted therefor, and the second substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Prentice, Chair; Fraser, Vice Chair, Capital Budget Chair; Pridemore, Vice Chair, Operating Budget; Zarelli, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Carrell, Fairley, Hatfield, Hewitt, Hobbs, Honeyford, Keiser, Kohl-Welles, Oemig, Parlette, Rasmussen, Regala, Roach, Rockefeller, Schoesler and Tom.

Staff: Paula Moore (786-7449)

Background: In 2005, the Washington Legislature created the Washington Early Learning Council (ELC) in the Office of the Governor to pull together previously disparate early learning programs and services and to help create a coherent, high quality early learning system for children from birth to five years. The Legislature also created a steering committee

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(Washington Learns) to conduct a comprehensive study and develop recommendations on early learning, K-12, and higher education. ELC served as the early learning advisory body for Washington Learns. The act authorizing ELC expires July 1, 2007.

In 2006, the Legislature created the Department of Early Learning (DEL) and directed the Director of DEL to participate in the creation and governance of a non-governmental private-public partnership (Thrive by Five) focused on supporting the government's investments in early learning and promoting school readiness and success.

Summary of Engrossed Second Substitute Bill: An early learning advisory council (ELAC) is established to advise DEL on statewide early learning needs and to develop a statewide early learning plan. ELAC may include up to 25 members:

- one representative each from DEL, the Office of Financial Management, the Department of Social and Health Services, the Department of Health, the Higher Education Coordinating Board, and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, appointed by the Governor;
- one representative from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, appointed by the Superintendent of Public Instruction;
- at least seven leaders in early childhood education appointed by the Governor, with one representative having expertise on children with disabilities, one on the K-12 system, one on family day care providers, and one on child care centers;
- two members of the House of Representatives, one from each caucus, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and two members of the Senate, one from each caucus, appointed by the President of the Senate;
- two parents, one of whom must serve on DEL's Parent Advisory Council, appointed by the Governor;
- one representative designated by sovereign tribal governments; and
- one representative from the Washington federation of independent schools.

After the initial year, each member must serve two-year terms and the terms will be staggered. ELAC must elect cochairs; one chair must represent a state agency and the other must be a nongovernmental member. DEL must provide staff to support ELAC.

Subject to the availability of funding, DEL must implement a Five-Star Voluntary Rating and Improvement System applicable to licensed or certified child care centers and homes and early education programs. The purpose of the rating system is to provide parents with information about the quality of child care and early education programs, improve the quality of such programs, increase the readiness of children for school, and close the disparity in access to quality care. DEL must report to the Legislature prior to implementation of the rating system. When an early learning information system is developed, DEL must provide parents with timely inspection and licensing action information about child care and early learning programs.

DEL must work collaboratively with a private-public partner and actively seek public and private money for the partnership. The private-public partner must enhance parent education and support; accept and spend funds for quality improvement initiatives; help early learning private-public partnerships form statewide; and assist the statewide movement to high quality early learning and the support of parents as a child's first and best teacher.

DEL must review and revise child care provider rules, to encourage mutual respect and to focus on keeping children safe and improving early learning outcomes for children. By July 2007, DEL must have a process and timeline for completing the rules review. A "nongovernmental private-public partnership" is defined.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: Yes.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Early Learning & K-12 Education): PRO: If we invest in early learning now, we all benefit later. Early learning sets a foundation for children in school and in life and prevents crime. The ELAC will provide a strategic framework to move forward and use resources wisely, but it should include representatives from the disability community and private schools. Child care provider rules need to be in a form that any parent can understand. A rating system is practical and will have a positive impact on child care quality, but it must include resources and supports for the additional costs associated with providing higher quality services. A tiered-reimbursement system must be included for the Quality Rating and Improvement System to work. However, the providers that do not participate in the voluntary rating system should not be considered low quality. We need to increase subsidy rates and provide more quality comprehensive early learning services for poor children. The public-private partnerships and family involvement components of the legislation are very important.

Persons Testifying (Early Learning & K-12 Education): PRO: Senator Kauffman, prime sponsor; Jone Bosworth, Department of Early Learning; Don Johnson, Cascade Christian Schools and Private School Advisory Council; Donna Obermeyer, Washington State Special Education Coalition; Amy Bell, YMCA; Agda Burchard, Washington Association for the Education of Young Children; Amie Lapp Payne, Headstart and Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program; Laura Loells, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids; Dan Kimball, Thurston County Sheriff; Donna Horne, Deb Harris, and Cathy Garland, St. Mike's Tikes Early Learning Center; Pam Toal, United Ways of Washington; Danette Clossy, Washington Chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics; Bill Hemingsgaard, Social Venture Partners; Elizabeth Thompson, Washington State Childcare Resource Referral Network; Janet Frieling, School's Out Washington; Mary Brown, Linda Clark, Providence Sound Home Care and Hospice.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means): PRO: We support this legislation as presented to you. We suggest you invest in early learning now as a preventative measure or you'll pay later in jail and criminal justice costs. The bill allows the department to meet its directives of enhancing inclusion; assisting parents to understand the quality of care provided in centers. It also allows for an IT system for monitoring the licensing rules, and ensuring that those rules are understandable and easily monitored by department staff.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: Judy Hartmann, Governor's Office; Don Pierce, Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs; Peter Antolin, Department of Early Learning.

House Amendment(s): The definition of "nongovernmental private-public partnership" is amended to include a focus on school readiness and parental support. The name "Five-Star Voluntary Rating and Improvement System" is changed to "Voluntary Quality Rating and Improvement System." The purpose of the rating system and who DEL must report to prior to implementing the rating system is clarified. DEL's duties will include making early learning resources available to parents and caregivers and providing clear and easily accessible information about quality and improving quality.