

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1943

As of March 17, 2009

Title: An act relating to creating a comprehensive statewide integrated pathway of preparation and professional development for the early learning and school-age program workforce.

Brief Description: Requiring recommendations for preparation and professional development for the early learning and school-age program workforce.

Sponsors: House Committee on Early Learning & Children's Services (originally sponsored by Representatives Kagi, Goodman, Priest, Walsh, Probst, Quall, Rolfes, Kenney, Dickerson, Kelley and Santos).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/27/09, 94-0.

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 3/16/09.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Kimberly Cushing (786-7421)

Background: The Department of Early Learning (DEL) is charged with coordinating, consolidating, and integrating child care and early learning programs and supporting the development of a comprehensive and collaborative system of early learning. Minimum licensing standards for child care and early learning programs include limited requirements relating to the qualifications, skills, and experience of the workforce in such programs. In addition to basic qualifications relating to licensing, individual early learning programs may include degree and educational requirements for program administrators or staff. Licensed child care providers in Washington are required to complete a minimum of ten hours of training annually. The Washington State Training and Registry System (STARS) is a web-based database to track completion of training by child care providers.

In spring 2008 DEL, Thrive by Five Washington (Thrive), and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) signed an early learning partnership resolution designating DEL as the lead agency for improvements to early learning professional development. In September 2008 the Professional Development Consortium (Consortium) was convened for the purpose of engaging multiple stakeholders in discussions for mapping the process of creating an integrated professional development system. One of the first steps in the Consortium's work was addressing the need for improving functionality of the STARS

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database. The focus of the Consortium's 2009 work plan relates mostly to identifying the core knowledge and competencies for early learning professionals.

Summary of Bill: The Consortium, in collaboration with DEL, must develop recommendations for a comprehensive statewide system of preparation and professional development for the early learning and school-age program workforce. The membership of the Consortium must include representatives from the following:

1. DEL;
2. Department of Health;
3. school districts and educational service districts;
4. unions representing child care providers;
5. State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC);
6. Economic Opportunity Institute;
7. OSPI;
8. Washington Indian Tribes;
9. Thrive;
10. School's Out Washington;
11. Washington Association for the Education of Young Children;
12. Washington Association for Head Start and Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program;
13. Washington Association for the Education of Personnel in Early Childhood Programs;
14. Washington Resource and Referral Network;
15. Washington State Family Child Care Association;
16. DEL Parent Advisory Committee; and
17. Washington State Parent Teacher Association.

The Consortium must map current professional development resources and strategies to identify gaps and recommend improved coordination; define the core competencies or knowledge areas for the workforce; and recommend a plan to implement a statewide comprehensive and integrated pathway of preparation and continuing professional development for the early learning and school-age program workforce.

The plan must include recommendations relating to a coherent system of professional development, including core competencies for staff; requirements for articulation agreements to enable effective transitions between two-year and four-year institutions of higher education and to allow staff and professionals to apply approved training programs toward credit-based learning; and a comprehensive registry of information to include workforce and professional development data.

The final report from the Consortium also must analyze gaps in professional development to address the needs of those serving children with physical or developmental disabilities, behavioral challenges, and other special needs; discuss evidence-based incentives and supports for additional training and education of the workforce; analyze evidence-based compensation policies to encourage and reward completion of professional development programs; and explore strategies for providing professional development opportunities in languages other than English.

DEL and the Consortium must report back to the Legislature and the Governor with a brief status update on September 15 and December 31, 2009, and provide final recommendations by December 31, 2010.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The Consortium is provided a policy framework to develop a clear plan for professional development for early learning educators. This bill is the result of months of collaborative work among stakeholders; it does not create a new state mandate but builds on the current work DEL is doing. The Early Learning Advisory Council has a representative on the consortium. Professional development is essential for quality child care. However, in Washington, low wages, high turnover, and low education rates are barriers to professional development. Washington lacks a coordinated system of professional development for early learning. While providers value community-based education because they feel safe in those environments, very few credits apply toward a degree. There is much work to be done to improve education for early learning professionals. The SBCTC is already looking at gaps in the educational pathway. We need to figure out how to get quality of care to everyone at a reasonable cost. For providers to remain National Association for the Education of Young Children accredited, teachers will have to have AA degrees or higher. The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) is currently part of the Consortium and should be added to the bill; the board can absorb the costs of participating.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Kagi, prime sponsor; Hannah Lidman, Economic Opportunity Institute; Michelle Andreas, SBCTC; Rick Allen, United Ways of Washington; Roberta Wright, In-home Child Care and Family Child Care Association of Pierce County; Erika Watson, Seed of Life, LLC; Debbie Havey, Childcare Action Council; Chris Thompson, HECB; Kursten Holabird, SEIU 925.