
SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 2867

State of Washington

61st Legislature

2010 Regular Session

By House Early Learning & Children's Services (originally sponsored by Representatives Kagi, Sells, White, Hunt, Chase, Kessler, Morrell, Van De Wege, Kenney, and Hasegawa; by request of Governor Gregoire)

READ FIRST TIME 02/03/10.

1 AN ACT Relating to early learning; amending RCW 43.215.005 and
2 43.215.020; and creating a new section.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 **Sec. 1.** RCW 43.215.005 and 2007 c 415 s 1 are each amended to read
5 as follows:

6 (1) The legislature recognizes that:

7 (a) Parents are their children's first and most important teachers
8 and decision makers;

9 (b) Research across disciplines now demonstrates that what happens
10 in the earliest years makes a critical difference in children's
11 readiness to succeed in school and life;

12 (c) Washington's competitiveness in the global economy requires a
13 world-class education system that starts early and supports life-long
14 learning;

15 (d) Washington state currently makes substantial investments in
16 voluntary child care and early learning services and supports, but
17 because services are fragmented across multiple state agencies, and
18 early learning providers lack the supports and incentives needed to

1 improve the quality of services they provide, many parents have
2 difficulty accessing high quality early learning services;

3 (e) A more cohesive and integrated voluntary early learning system
4 would result in greater efficiencies for the state, increased
5 partnership between the state and the private sector, improved access
6 to high quality early learning services, and better employment and
7 early learning outcomes for families and all children.

8 (2) The legislature finds that:

9 (a) The early years of a child's life are critical to the child's
10 healthy brain development and that the quality of caregiving during the
11 early years can significantly impact the child's intellectual, social,
12 and emotional development;

13 (b) A successful outcome for every child obtaining a K-12 education
14 depends on children being prepared from birth for academic and social
15 success in school. For children at risk of school failure, the
16 achievement gap often emerges as early as eighteen months of age;

17 (c) There currently is a shortage of high quality services and
18 supports for children ages birth to three and their parents and
19 caregivers; and

20 (d) Increasing the availability of high quality services for
21 children ages birth to three and their parents and caregivers will
22 result in improved school and life outcomes.

23 (3) Therefore, the legislature intends to establish a robust birth-
24 to-three continuum of services for parents and caregivers of young
25 children in order to provide education and support regarding the
26 importance of early childhood development.

27 ((+3)) (4) The purpose of this chapter is:

28 (a) To establish the department of early learning;

29 (b) To coordinate and consolidate state activities relating to
30 child care and early learning programs;

31 (c) To safeguard and promote the health, safety, and well-being of
32 children receiving child care and early learning assistance, which is
33 paramount over the right of any person to provide care;

34 (d) To provide tools to promote the hiring of suitable providers of
35 child care by:

36 (i) Providing parents with access to information regarding child
37 care providers;

1 (ii) Providing parents with child care licensing action histories
2 regarding child care providers; and

3 (iii) Requiring background checks of applicants for employment in
4 any child care facility licensed or regulated under current law;

5 (e) To promote linkages and alignment between early learning
6 programs and elementary schools and support the transition of children
7 and families from prekindergarten environments to kindergarten;

8 (f) To promote the development of a sufficient number and variety
9 of adequate child care and early learning facilities, both public and
10 private; and

11 (g) To license agencies and to assure the users of such agencies,
12 their parents, the community at large and the agencies themselves that
13 adequate minimum standards are maintained by all child care and early
14 learning facilities.

15 ((+4)) (5) This chapter does not expand the state's authority to
16 license or regulate activities or programs beyond those licensed or
17 regulated under existing law.

18 **Sec. 2.** RCW 43.215.020 and 2007 c 394 s 5 are each amended to read
19 as follows:

20 (1) The department of early learning is created as an executive
21 branch agency. The department is vested with all powers and duties
22 transferred to it under this chapter and such other powers and duties
23 as may be authorized by law.

24 (2) The primary duties of the department are to implement state
25 early learning policy and to coordinate, consolidate, and integrate
26 child care and early learning programs in order to administer programs
27 and funding as efficiently as possible. The department's duties
28 include, but are not limited to, the following:

29 (a) To support both public and private sectors toward a
30 comprehensive and collaborative system of early learning that serves
31 parents, children, and providers and to encourage best practices in
32 child care and early learning programs;

33 (b) To make early learning resources available to parents and
34 caregivers;

35 (c) To carry out activities, including providing clear and easily
36 accessible information about quality and improving the quality of early

1 learning opportunities for young children, in cooperation with the
2 nongovernmental private-public partnership;

3 (d) To administer child care and early learning programs;

4 (e) To standardize internal financial audits, oversight visits,
5 performance benchmarks, and licensing criteria, so that programs can
6 function in an integrated fashion;

7 (f) To support the implementation of the nongovernmental private-
8 public partnership and cooperate with that partnership in pursuing its
9 goals including providing data and support necessary for the successful
10 work of the partnership;

11 (g) To work cooperatively and in coordination with the early
12 learning council;

13 (h) To collaborate with the K-12 school system at the state and
14 local levels to ensure appropriate connections and smooth transitions
15 between early learning and K-12 programs; (~~and~~)

16 (i) To develop a comprehensive birth-to-three plan to provide
17 education and support through a continuum of options;

18 (j) Upon the development of an early learning information system,
19 to make available to parents timely inspection and licensing action
20 information through the internet and other means.

21 (3) As funding for the expansion of the prekindergarten program for
22 three and four-year olds under this chapter is appropriated by the
23 legislature, the legislature also intends to appropriate a proportional
24 amount of funding to the department for implementation of the services
25 and programs under subsection (2)(i) of this section. Such services
26 may include, but are not limited to: Home visiting; quality incentives
27 for infant and toddler child care subsidies; quality improvements for
28 family home and center-based child care programs serving infants and
29 toddlers; professional development; early literacy programs; and
30 informal supports for family, friend, and neighbor caregivers.

31 (4) The department's programs shall be designed in a way that
32 respects and preserves the ability of parents and legal guardians to
33 direct the education, development, and upbringing of their children,
34 and that recognizes and honors cultural and linguistic diversity. The
35 department shall include parents and legal guardians in the development
36 of policies and program decisions affecting their children.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** The department of early learning, in
2 collaboration with the early learning nongovernmental private-public
3 partnership and the early learning advisory council, shall develop a
4 birth-to-three plan, including recommended appropriation levels, and
5 report to the appropriate committees of the legislature and the
6 governor by December 1, 2010.

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