

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 2569

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Early Learning & Human Services  
Ways & Means

**Title:** An act relating to improving quality in early learning programs.

**Brief Description:** Implementing a voluntary quality rating and improvement system for child care centers and early learning programs.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Orwall, Goodman, Kagi, Maxwell, Reykdal, Dickerson, Tharinger, Pollet and Roberts.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Early Learning & Human Services: 1/26/12, 1/27/12 [DPS];  
Ways & Means: 2/4/12, 2/7/12 [DP2S(w/o sub ELHS)].

**Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill**

- Modifies the stated purposes of the voluntary quality rating and improvement system (QRIS).
- Articulates the Department of Early Learning's duties with regard to the QRIS.
- Directs the Washington State Institute for Public Policy to conduct a longitudinal study of the QRIS with an initial report due December 1, 2015, and annually thereafter.
- For the 2016-17 school year and thereafter, any additional funding for the QRIS is subject to appropriation by the Legislature.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & HUMAN SERVICES

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Roberts, Vice Chair; Walsh, Ranking Minority Member; Dickerson, Goodman, Johnson and Orwall.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Overstreet.

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*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.*

**Staff:** Megan Palchak (786-7120).

**Background:**

Voluntary Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS).

In 2007 the Legislature required the Department of Early Learning (DEL) to implement a voluntary quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) for licensed or certified child care centers and homes and early education programs in collaboration with community and statewide partners, subject to the availability of funds.

Currently, the stated purpose of the QRIS is to:

- provide parents with information about the quality of child care and early education programs;
- support improvements in early learning programs throughout the state;
- increase the readiness of children for school; and
- close the disparity in access to quality care.

The DEL is currently scaling up its QRIS effort using federal funds recently awarded through Race to the Top.

Washington State Child Care Resource and Referral Network.

The DEL must work with the Washington State Child Care Resource and Referral Network (Network) and others to create local child care resource and referral organizations (organizations). These organizations are authorized to carry out needs assessments, resource development, provider training, technical assistance, and parent information and training. The DEL must actively seek funds to distribute as grants to the Network or potential organizations. Staff and technical assistance to the Network and local organizations must be provided by the DEL. Data about local child care needs and availability for future planning and development must be provided through the Network or local organizations. The DEL must provide training and technical assistance to child care providers in coordination with the Network and local organizations.

Definition of Early Learning.

"Early learning" includes, but is not limited to, programs and services for child care; state, federal, private, and nonprofit preschool; child care subsidies; child care resource and referral; parent education and support; and training and professional development for early learning professionals.

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**Summary of Substitute Bill:**

Under this act, the DEL must implement the voluntary QRIS for licensed and certified child care centers and homes and other early learning programs as determined by the DEL.

The stated purposes of the QRIS are modified to:

- give families information about the quality of early learning and school-age programs;

- add that improvements in early learning programs throughout the state will be supported above the minimum safety and health standards required for licensure;
- promote access to quality early learning programs for all children; and
- add the promotion and support of culturally competent professional development and training for early and school-age care professionals.

To the extent that funds are available, upon full implementation of the QRIS, the DEL must:

- assign ratings to participating early learning programs based on research-based voluntary QRIS standards, including: child outcomes, facility curriculum and learning environment, culturally competent professional development and training, and family engagement and partnership;
- partner with community-based organizations, higher education, and other stakeholders to provide:
  - supports and incentives to QRIS participants, including highly trained coaches, culturally competent pedagogy, professional development, and training and facility improvement grants in partnership with the state child care resource and referral agency;
  - incentives for early learning professionals for the attainment of training and education; and
  - increased child care assistance reimbursement rates and payments that reflect the cost of quality programs for participants including compensation for staff in participating programs, and promote affordability of high-quality early programs for all families;
- evaluate the effectiveness of the QRIS every three years and make the evaluation report publicly available;
- issue recommendations to the Legislature regarding additional incentives to support compensation increases based on facility rating;
- develop a plan, in consultation with stakeholders, for full inclusion of licensed and certified school-age programs serving children ages 5 through 12 years in the QRIS;
- report program ratings on a public website; and
- partner with the child care resource and referral agency or other entities to expand parent awareness about the QRIS and its potential to improve child care quality and help parents make child care decisions that meet family needs and support school readiness of children.

### **Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

The substitute bill adds cultural competence elements so that:

- one of the purposes of the QRIS is to promote and support culturally competent professional development and training;
- the DEL will assign ratings, in part, based on culturally competent professional development and training;
- culturally competent pedagogy is added to the list of supports and incentives that may be provided to QRIS participants; and
- a reference to English Language Learners is added.

Clarifications are provided so that:

- the QRIS must focus on *encouraging* participation;

- the recommendations to the Legislature regarding additional incentives to support compensation increases no longer must recognize the role of promoting the affordability of high-quality early learning programs for all families; and
  - the term constituents is replaced with stakeholders.
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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available. New fiscal note requested on January 29, 2012.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) Given that Washington won the Race to the Top Award, the QRIS should be taken to scale. This bill will help the Legislature be part of a dialogue on comprehensive early learning. This legislation will make it clearer in statute what the DEL is doing to support high-quality early learning in Washington. The QRIS provides great opportunities for collaboration. It reinforces positive rewards and raises the bar for everyone. It promotes consistency and quality. It provides intentionality to professional development efforts. It will provide parents with easy to use information to help guide their choices. It could help stabilize the child care work force and improve compensation. It has the ability to bridge cultural divides. It has been field-tested and evaluation results have been positive. The QRIS is being implemented deliberately. Race to the Top funds will cover the program for the next four years. It is completely voluntary. No provider will be publicly listed if they choose not to be. The QRIS is not about regulation. The QRIS will support critical infrastructure to keep improving early learning, which will result in improvements for the economy and society.

(Opposed) The field studies conducted by Mathematica and the University of Washington are flawed. They only look at a small percentage of providers. In 2010 and 2011 there was not a control group. The study was not adequately inclusive of diverse communities. The costs of the QRIS are not sustainable after the grant funds go away. When the state gets involved in private business, there can be problems.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Representative Orwall, prime sponsor; Amy Blondin, Department of Early Learning; Laura Wells, Fight Crime Invest in Kids; John Stines, Tumwater Police Department; Karen Tvedt, Washington Association for the Education of Young Children and League of Women Voters–Washington; Lauren Hipp, Thrive by Five Washington; Chris Moon, Early Childhood Teacher Preparation Council and South Puget Sound Community College; Scott Parker, Washington State Child Care Research and Referral Network; Lani Todd, Service Employees International Union 925; Kristi Vavrosky; Sarah Francis, Moms Rising; April Ritter; Onion Carrillo; and Steve Leahy and Rick Panowicz, America's Edge.

(Opposed) Sharon Hanek; and Suzie Hanson, Washington Federation of Independent Schools.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.

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## HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

**Majority Report:** The second substitute bill be substituted therefor and the second substitute bill do pass and do not pass the substitute bill by Committee on Early Learning & Human Services. Signed by 27 members: Representatives Hunter, Chair; Darneille, Vice Chair; Hasegawa, Vice Chair; Alexander, Ranking Minority Member; Bailey, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Dammeier, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Orcutt, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Carlyle, Chandler, Cody, Dickerson, Haigh, Haler, Hinkle, Hudgins, Hunt, Kagi, Kenney, Ormsby, Parker, Pettigrew, Ross, Schmick, Seaquist, Springer, Sullivan and Wilcox.

**Staff:** Wendy Polzin (786-7137).

### **Summary of Recommendation of Committee On Ways & Means Compared to Recommendation of Committee On Early Learning & Human Services:**

The Ways and Means Committee (Committee) recommended inclusion of a longitudinal study by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy due to the Legislature by December 1, 2015, and annually thereafter. The Committee also recommended language stating any additional funding for the voluntary quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) is subject to appropriation by the Legislature beyond the 2016-17 school year.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date of Second Substitute Bill:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

### **Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) Washington is one of many states with the QRIS to incentivize child care providers. There are currently 55 participants, but the Department of Early Learning (DEL) expects to expand that number to 3,500, serving 72,000 kids. The costs are incentives and education money provided to providers, as well as facility improvement money. The DEL is confident they have built a QRIS system that will be sustainable beyond the life of the federal grant. There is no State General Fund funding in the program right now; all funding is federal. Through the four years of the grant, the amount of Race to the Top funding goes down as other funds will go up. To get crime prevention results from early learning it has to be high quality care. The QRIS provides a critical infrastructure. About 50 percent of kids under age five use licensed child care. House Bills 2448 and 2569 do have intersections. Thrive by Five Washington administered a field test of the QRIS called Seeds to Success. One aspect was a randomized field test that helped to refine the QRIS. These evaluations

have shown effectiveness and that the state is ready to go on this system. Spreading best practices on a voluntary basis is a good method. This will make the best practices the norm. Quality outcomes will be the result. Investing in the talented front line child care professionals is vital due to the high turnover from low compensation. Keeping front line professionals incentivized is what any company would want.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Amy Blondin, Department of Early Learning; Laura Wells, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids; Ryan Pricco, Washington State Child Care Resource and Referral Network; Lauren Hipp, Thrive by Five Washington; and Steve Leahy, America's Edge.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.