

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2608

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

Title: An act relating to adopting early learning guidelines.

Brief Description: Requiring the department of early learning to develop state early learning guidelines.

Sponsors: Representatives Kagi, Orwall, Sullivan, Haigh, Maxwell, Kenney and Tharinger; by request of Department of Early Learning.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Early Learning & Human Services: 1/26/12, 1/31/12 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the Department of Early Learning to develop and periodically review early learning guidelines in partnership with other entities.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & HUMAN SERVICES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Roberts, Vice Chair; Walsh, Ranking Minority Member; Hope, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Dickerson, Goodman, Johnson and Orwall.

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

Staff: Megan Palchak (786-7120).

Background:

The Department of Early Learning.

The Department of Early Learning (DEL) was created as an executive branch agency in 2006. Generally, the DEL's primary duties are to implement state early learning policy and coordinate, consolidate, and integrate child care and early learning programs in order to

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administer programs and funding as efficiently as possible, and to design programs in a way that both respects and preserves the ability of parents and legal guardians to direct the education, development, and upbringing of their children and recognizes and honors cultural and linguistic diversity. Parents must be included in the development of policies and program decisions affecting their children.

Nongovernmental Private-Public Partnership.

Under the DEL statutes, "nongovernmental private-public partnership" is defined as an entity registered as a nonprofit corporation in Washington with a primary focus on early learning, school readiness, and parental support, and an ability to raise a minimum of \$5 million in contributions.

Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction is the primary agency charged with overseeing K-12 public education in Washington.

Washington State Early Learning and Development Benchmarks.

According to the DEL, since 2005 Washington has had a set of generally agreed-upon guidelines for child development that support families, caregivers, and teachers in their work with children to help support school readiness. These guidelines have been referred to as the Washington State Early Learning and Development Benchmark, but will be called "early learning guidelines." These guidelines are currently under review.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The DEL must develop early learning guidelines jointly with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the nongovernmental private-public partnership. The DEL must review and revise the guidelines periodically with a committee offering broad stakeholder representation and a tribal member from a federally recognized tribe. The DEL must make the early learning guidelines widely available.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The term "partnership" is replaced with "jointly" to clarify that the guidelines will be developed jointly, rather than "in partnership." A tribal representative from a federally recognized tribe is included in the committee with which the DEL must review and revise the guidelines.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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) This is agency-request legislation that adds what the DEL is already doing in statute. The guidelines have been developed based on scientific research with input from diverse groups. The DEL contracted with a cultural competency expert to conduct a review of the guidelines to ensure they are culturally relevant. They link to academic standards. The guidelines have been well received and are reportedly useful to providers.

(Opposed) Development of the guidelines is not the concern; how they may be used is troubling. Standards based systems requiring outcome measurement is problematic in early childhood development. During this phase of life, children develop differently. There are concerns about how assessment tools will be used and how evaluations will be conducted. Many private schools do not abide by these methods; other methods should be allowed. Also, the lack of a fiscal note is concerning. Organizing a collaborative effort requires funding.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Kagi, prime sponsor; Amy Blondin, Department of Early Learning; Yoshe Revelle; and Bob Butts, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

(Opposed) Sharon Hanek.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.