

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6226

As of January 18, 2012

Title: An act relating to authorization periods for subsidized child care.

Brief Description: Concerning authorization periods for subsidized child care.

Sponsors: Senators Frockt, Harper, Regala, Zarelli, Fain, Hargrove, Kohl-Welles and Keiser.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 1/17/12.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Staff: Jennifer Strus (786-7316)

Background: Currently, eligibility for subsidized child care – Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) – must be re-authorized every six months unless the child is also enrolled in an Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (EACAP), Head Start or an early Head Start program, in which case re-authorizations need occur only every 12 months. If a change in circumstances occurs during the 12-month period, then the reauthorization would have to occur earlier than 12 months.

Summary of Bill: Eligibility must be re-authorized every 12 months for all recipients of subsidized child care services regardless of whether the child is also enrolled in EACAP, Head Start or early Head Start. If a change in circumstances occurs, the reauthorization would have to occur earlier than 12 months.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 16, 2012.

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: This bill represents years of effort to make WCCC operate more smoothly. Under the current system, parents and child care providers never know how long their WCCC is authorized. Having short reauthorization periods is very

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disruptive to both parents and providers. Many disruptions to child care were the result of paperwork errors, conflicting information, or inability to get in touch with the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). The federal Office of Child Care has recommended that states adopt a 12-month authorization period for subsidized child care because it provides greater continuity for all involved, especially the children. Reauthorization requires parents to submit paperwork to DSHS, and in many cases the parents' circumstances have not changed, yet they must file the paperwork anyway. This is a waste of precious resources. Many providers will continue to care for children while waiting for reauthorization to go through, and while they should be paid for that time, some are not. This bill would do away with redundant work by DSHS staff and free them up to deal with the applications for WCCC which are taking a long time to approve because of the staff cuts to DSHS in past years.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Frockt, prime sponsor; Lani Todd, Service Employees International Union 925; Katy Warren, WA State Assn. of Head Start, ECEAP.