

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6226

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Human Services & Corrections, February 2, 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, 2/02/12 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6226 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Hargrove, Chair; Regala, Vice Chair; Stevens, Ranking Minority Member; Carrell, Harper, McAuliffe and Padden.

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 (Recommended Substitute): 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.

An applicant or recipient of WCCC must provide DSHS the following information if appropriate: (1) notification to WCCC staff within five days if the provider changes; (2) notification to provider within ten days when DSHS changes recipient's child care authorization; and (3) notification to DSHS within ten days of any change in the following:

- the number of child care hours the recipient needs;

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- the recipient's countable income if the change would affect the recipient's eligibility for WCCC;
- the recipient's household size
- employment, school or TANF work activities;
- the address and phone number of the recipient's in-home or relative provider;
- the recipient's home address and phone number; and
- the recipient's legal obligation to pay child support.

The applicant or recipient must also report to WCCC staff, within 24 hours, any pending charges or conviction information the recipient learns about the in-home/relative provider or about anyone 16 years of age or older who resides with the child care provider.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS COMMITTEE (Recommended Substitute): Added requirements that applicants or recipients of WCCC must follow to continue to be eligible for WCCC.

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 on Original Bill: 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 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.