
SENATE BILL 6532

State of Washington

62nd Legislature

2012 Regular Session

By Senators Frockt, Litzow, and Harper

Read first time 01/27/12. Referred to Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education.

1 AN ACT Relating to improving quality in early learning programs;
2 amending RCW 43.215.100; and creating a new section.

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

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that all parents need
5 better information when choosing quality child care and that licensed
6 child care providers need adequate support, training, and incentives to
7 improve the quality of child care they offer. The legislature further
8 finds that high-quality child care helps prepare children for success
9 in school, and that Washington state needs a common understanding of
10 what elements make up high-quality child care programs.

11 The legislature further finds that a two-year field test of a
12 voluntary quality rating and improvement system, administered by the
13 department of early learning private-public partnership, has prepared
14 our state to begin statewide implementation of such a system, to the
15 extent funds are available.

16 The legislature further finds that a voluntary quality rating and
17 improvement system is an important strategy to align early learning
18 programs, including licensed child care programs, the federal head
19 start program, and the state prekindergarten program.

1 **Sec. 2.** RCW 43.215.100 and 2007 c 394 s 4 are each amended to read
2 as follows:

3 ~~((Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this
4 specific purpose, the department, in collaboration with community and
5 statewide partners, shall implement a voluntary quality rating and
6 improvement system applicable to licensed or certified child care
7 centers and homes and early education programs. The purpose of the
8 voluntary quality rating and improvement system is to give parents
9 clear and easily accessible information about the quality of child care
10 and early education programs, support improvement in early learning
11 programs throughout the state, increase the readiness of children for
12 school, and close the disparity in access to quality care. Before
13 final implementation of the voluntary quality rating and improvement
14 system, the department shall report to the appropriate policy and
15 fiscal committees of the legislature. Nothing in this section changes
16 the department's responsibility to collectively bargain over mandatory
17 subjects.))~~ (1) To the extent funds are available for this purpose, the
18 department of early learning shall implement a voluntary quality rating
19 and improvement system for licensed and certified child care centers
20 and homes and other early learning programs as determined by the
21 department.

22 (2) The voluntary quality rating and improvement system must focus
23 on participation of all programs with targeted strategies for
24 increasing participation and quality of programs serving low-income
25 children.

26 (3) The purposes of the voluntary quality rating and improvement
27 system are to:

28 (a) Increase the readiness of children for school;

29 (b) Give families clear and easily accessible information about the
30 quality of early learning and school-age programs;

31 (c) Support improvement in child care throughout the state above
32 the minimum safety and health standards required for child care
33 licensure;

34 (d) Promote access to quality early learning programs for all
35 children; and

36 (e) Promote and support professional development and training for
37 early learning and school-age care professionals.

1 (4) Upon full implementation of the voluntary quality rating and
2 improvement system, the department shall, to the extent funds are
3 available:

4 (a) Assign ratings to participating early learning programs based
5 on research-based voluntary quality rating and improvement program
6 standards, which will include:

7 (i) Child outcomes;

8 (ii) Facility curriculum and learning environment;

9 (iii) Professional development and training; and

10 (iv) Family engagement and partnership;

11 (b) In support of high quality child care and success in school for
12 children, the department shall partner with community-based
13 organizations, higher education, and other key stakeholders to provide,
14 to the extent funds are available:

15 (i) Supports and incentives to voluntary quality rating and
16 improvement system participants including, but not limited to, highly
17 trained coaches with expertise in early childhood development,
18 professional development, training and facility improvement grants, in
19 partnership with the state child care resource and referral agency,
20 consistent with its responsibilities under RCW 43.215.545, or other
21 appropriate entities;

22 (ii) Professional development, training, and higher education
23 opportunities, including scholarships, for participating program staff
24 and directors linked to a career pathway in the field of early
25 childhood education;

26 (iii) Supports that expand family engagement and understanding of
27 quality early childhood education in ways that are inclusive and
28 respectful of the diversity of families and children with special
29 needs;

30 (iv) Incentives for early learning professionals for the attainment
31 of training and education; and

32 (v) Increased child care assistance reimbursement rates and
33 payments that reflect the cost of quality programs for participants
34 including compensation for staff in participating programs, and promote
35 affordability of high-quality early learning programs for all families;

36 (c) Evaluate the effectiveness of the quality rating and
37 improvement system every three years, and make the evaluation report
38 publicly available;

1 (d) By December 2015, make recommendations to the legislature about
2 adding additional incentives to support compensation increases based on
3 facility rating. The recommendations must recognize the role of
4 appropriate compensation in supporting education and retention and
5 promoting the affordability of high-quality early learning programs for
6 all families;

7 (e) In consultation with constituents, develop a plan for full
8 inclusion of licensed and certified school-age programs serving
9 children ages five through twelve years in the voluntary quality rating
10 and improvement system; and

11 (f) Report program ratings on a publicly accessible web site and
12 partner with the child care resource and referral agency or other
13 entities to expand parent awareness regarding the voluntary quality
14 rating and improvement system and its potential to improve child care
15 quality and help parents make child care decisions that meet family
16 needs and support the school readiness of children.

17 (5) Nothing in this section changes the department's responsibility
18 to collectively bargain over mandatory subjects.

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