
Early Learning & Human Services Committee

HB 1671

Brief Description: Concerning child care reform.

Sponsors: Representatives Farrell, Walsh, Kagi, Green, Sullivan, Jinkins, Pettigrew, Hunt, Ormsby, Stonier, Fitzgibbon, Goodman, Cody, Morrell, Maxwell, Appleton, Wylie, Orwall, Reykdal, Freeman, Riccelli, Fey, Tarleton, Ryu, Pollet, Bergquist and Santos.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates a legislative task force to examine specific components of the working connections child care program.
- Defines in statute Early Achievers and the child care consumer and provider bill of rights.
- Requires Department of Early Learning to create a parent and provider oversight board and revise certain rules relating to working connections child care program.

Hearing Date: 2/15/13

Staff: Lindsay Lanham (786-7120).

Background:

The Working Connections Child Care Program (WCCC) provides subsidies to child care providers serving families at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty line. The WCCC is often associated with Washington State's WorkFirst program and is intended to support parents who are working, attending training, or enrolling in educational programs outside the home. Not all families receiving the WCCC benefits, however, participate in approved Workfirst activities. For example, a parent under 22 years of age may be eligible for the WCCC benefits for high school development. Children of families receiving the WCCC benefits are required to be less than 13 years of age or less than 19 years of age and have a verified special need or be under court supervision.

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.

The Department of Early Learning (DEL) has the authority to establish and implement policies in the WCCC. The Department of Social and Health Services has the responsibility for verifying a families' eligibility to receive the WCCC subsidies.

In 2007 Engrossed Second Substitute Senate Bill 5828 established Early Achievers, which is Washington State's quality rating and improvement system. The program was developed by the DEL and the University of Washington. Early Achievers establishes a common set of expectations and standards that define, measure, and improve the quality of early learning settings. All WCCC providers have the option of participating in Early Achievers.

Summary of Bill:

A legislative task force is established to examine the tiered reimbursement model, child care enrollment procedures, eligibility requirement rules, and opportunities for child care expansion.

Early Achievers is also defined and the five levels of quality standards are explained in detail. The child care consumer and provider bill of rights is also established in statute.

The DEL is required to increase the WCCC subsidy by 10 percent and copays funded by families must return to the levels in effect on July 1, 2010. Additionally, the DEL must adopt rules to expand the WCCC eligibility to include various education activities such as participation in vocational training programs or two-year associate degree programs. By December 1, 2013, the DEL must eliminate the current custody/visitation policy and the activity schedule, design a subsidy system that is flexible and accounts for small changes in parents' work schedule, reduce the number of minor changes required for reporting, and clarify the child support as income requirement. Finally, the DEL must establish a parent and provider oversight board.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 7, 2013.

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