

HOUSE BILL REPORT

2SHB 1723

As Passed Legislature

Title: An act relating to expanding and streamlining early learning services and programs.

Brief Description: Concerning early learning opportunities.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Kagi, Walsh, Farrell, Maxwell, Roberts, Freeman, Goodman, Sawyer, Sullivan, Jinkins, Seaquist, Lytton, Haigh, Hunter, Morrell, Sells, Ryu, Morris, McCoy, Reykdal, Tarleton, Tharinger, Pollet, Fey, Moscoso, Bergquist, Ormsby and Santos).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Early Learning & Human Services: 2/15/13, 2/21/13 [DPS];
Appropriations: 2/26/13, 3/1/13 [DP2S(w/o sub ELHS)].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/6/13, 59-38.
Senate Amended.
Passed Senate: 4/15/13, 46-2.
House Refused to Concur.
Senate Receded.
Senate Amended.
Passed Senate: 4/24/13, 44-3.
House Concurred.
Passed House: 4/25/13, 63-35.
Passed Legislature.

Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill

- Creates a technical working group to examine child care and early learning eligibility processes and funding streams.
- Grants schools administering the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) the authority to utilize up to three school days at the start of the school year to meet with parents and families.
- Defines Early Achievers, Early Start, and the Washington State Preschool Program.

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.

- Outlines expectations for the Department of Early Learning with regards to the Washington State Preschool Program, Working Connections Child Care, Early Achievers, home visiting services, and subsidy rates.
- Specifies the requirements for a provider to receive tiered subsidy rate enhancement via Early Achievers.
- Specifies that all Washington State Preschool Programs receiving state funding must enroll in Early Achievers by 2015.
- Specifies that the Legislature's requirement to fund the expansion of the Washington State Preschool Program is subject to the availability of funds appropriated for this specific purpose.
- Requires exempt providers to participate in continuing education, if adequate funding is available.

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; Freeman, Vice Chair; Walsh, Ranking Minority Member; Farrell, Goodman, MacEwen, Roberts and Sawyer.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Scott, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Overstreet and Zeiger.

Staff: Lindsay Lanham (786-7120).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The second substitute bill be substituted therefor and the second substitute bill do pass and do not pass the substitute bill by Committee on Early Learning & Human Services. Signed by 18 members: Representatives Hunter, Chair; Ormsby, Vice Chair; Carlyle, Cody, Dunshee, Green, Haigh, Hudgins, Hunt, Jinkins, Kagi, Maxwell, Morrell, Pedersen, Pettigrew, Seaquist, Springer and Sullivan.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Alexander, Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Wilcox, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Buys, Dahlquist, Fagan, Haler, Harris, Parker, Pike, Ross, Schmick and Taylor.

Staff: Wendy Polzin (786-7137).

Background:

In Washington, there are several early learning, child care, and parent education programs. Each program has unique objectives, eligibility requirements, processes for enrollment, hours of operation, and funding streams.

Home visiting programs provide support and education to expectant parents and new families. Home visiting programs are voluntary and offer an array of in-person services to families based on the particular objectives of the program and needs of the family. There are several home visiting programs utilized in Washington. Nurse-Family Partnership, and Parents as Teachers are two examples of home visiting programs.

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'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.

The Washington State Preschool Program, or the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) is an early learning program for children ages 3 to 5 years and who have not entered kindergarten. The ECEAP provides preschool education, family support, and health and nutritional services to families at or below 110 percent of the federal poverty line.

In 2007 the Legislature supported the development of Early Achievers, which is Washington's quality rating and improvement system. Early Achievers establishes a common set of expectations and standards that define, measure, and improve the quality of early learning settings. Participation in Early Achievers is voluntary.

Summary of Second Substitute Bill:

Schools administrating the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) are granted the authority to utilize up to three school days at the start of the school year to meet with parents and families. Additionally, the terms "Early Achievers, Early Start, and the Washington State Preschool Program" are defined. A technical working group is also established to examine federal and state early education funding streams and early education eligibility processes. The technical working group is charged with developing technical options for system designs that blend and braid federal and state funding streams for early learning programs.

The Department of Early Learning (DEL) is required to apply data already collected and make biennial recommendations to the legislature regarding WCCC subsidy and state-funded preschool rates and compensation models that would attract and retain high quality early learning professionals. When additional funding is appropriated for the specific purpose of home visiting and parent and caregiver support, the DEL must reserve at least 80 percent of funding to be deposited into the home visiting services account and up to 20 percent may be used for other parent or caregiver support services. Home visiting services must include programs that serve families involved in the child welfare system.

The Legislature is required to fund the expansion of the Washington State Preschool Program in fiscal year 2014, if funds are appropriated for this specific purpose. Additionally by fiscal year 2015, all Washington State Preschool Programs receiving state funding must enroll in Early Achievers. Before final implementation of the Early Achievers program, the DEL must report to the Legislature on progress of the program as defined in the Race to the Top federal grant and expenditures. When reviewing applicants for state funding for the Washington State Preschool Program, the DEL must consider local community needs, demonstrated capacity, and the need to support a mixed delivery system of early learning that includes alternative models for delivery including licensed centers and licensed family child care providers.

Subject to the availability of funds appropriated for this specific purposes, beginning in September 1, 2013, the DEL is required to increase the base rate for all child care providers by 10 percent and provide working connections child care providers a 5 percent subsidy rate increase for enrolling in Early Achievers level 2. Any provider receiving tiered subsidy rate enhancements must complete level 2 within 30 months or the subsidy rate will return to the level 1 rate of Early Achievers. In order to maintain the subsidy rate increase, providers must also actively participate in the Early Achievers and continue to advance towards level 5 of the program. Finally, exempt providers are required to participate in continuing education, if adequate funding is available.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Early Learning & Human Services):

(In support) Parents are a child's first and most important teachers. Parents need opportunities to learn about the research and learn about the importance for children to hear language and have rich experiences early in life because that is what prepares them for education.

The research on brain science consistently demonstrates that by the time children reach kindergarten their brains are already 85 to 90 percent fully developed. The brain is only 25 percent developed when children arrive in this world. The first five years are absolutely critical for preparing children for kindergarten. Many children are not ready for kindergarten, however, so the achievement gap begins the very first day of kindergarten.

The best investment we can make in crime prevention is getting kids off to a good start. Many sheriffs agree that the most effective crime prevention tools are empirically proven programs such as home visiting and high-quality early learning. These programs get children off to a good start in life. In one study, children assigned to a control group who did not participate in preschool were more than 70 percent more likely to be arrested for a violent crime by the age of 18 than their peers who attended preschool. The research on home visiting is also compelling. A research study suggests that children with parents assigned to

the control group who did not participate in home visiting were more than twice as likely to be convicted of a crime by the time the child reached 19 years of age. The more we invest in high-quality early learning and home visiting; the safer our communities will be in the future. Some prosecutors wonder if the cycle of crime may be stopped by the offering early interventions. Seventy percent of prison inmates do not have a high school diploma. Early high-quality learning is an evidence-based or proven way to increase graduation rates. If we increase high school graduation rates, we will decrease crime. This is a crime prevention bill as much as it is an education bill.

Some parents report that the ECEAP supported their children in academic improvements, social skills, and improving their children's health. The ECEAP also encouraged a mother to grow as a parent, gain confidence in herself, and to realize that she had a dream in life. The ECEAP, however, has a waitlist in some regions. In fact, less than 3 percent of the children 3 years of age who are eligible for the ECEAP are being served, because of the great need that exists for qualifying 4 year olds in Washington. When it works, the WCCC is an amazing program that can help support families during a transitional time; however, eligibility processes can be concerning. Family, friend, and neighbor care is also important; as such, the inclusion of support to family, friend, and neighbor caregivers is appreciated.

Some school districts are partnering with the early learning community to make certain that Washington children are school ready. The partnership is contributing to improved outcomes for the children. In fact, one school district has gone from having 60 percent of their children ready for school to having 90 percent of their children ready for school. Quality early learning is truly helping children who come from disadvantaged backgrounds and gives children a fair shot and life of opportunity and success.

The legislative task force is a great way to strengthen synergies between policy makers and early learning professionals. This bill is important because it works to reduce silos in the system. Concentrating on at-risk kids is a smart use of tax-payers investment. A comprehensive and collaborative approach is best practice in the business community, as is the annual view of rates based on market rates and annual rates of inflation. Quality is critical in producing a good return on investment. Children in Washington deserve the best our tax payers can provide.

There has been some interest in the identified funding source of this bill; however, early learning is the best investment a state can make. Initiative 502 revenue is a great opportunity to invest needed funding to improve early learning programming in Washington. Among an array of positive outcomes, high-quality early learning is shown to reduce marijuana use in adults.

This bill recognizes that children's optimum development depends on a range of high quality settings from birth to 5. Educational success for children in Washington depends on access to early learning services.

The focus on children birth to 3 is also very important as well and this attention in the bill is appreciated. The ECEAP needs another year to prepare for the mandatory enrollment in Early Achievers. Additionally, there is some concern that contracted slots be utilized for

providers at level 3 of Early Achievers, to ensure vulnerable children have access to the highest level of care.

(Opposed) None.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Appropriations):

(In support) The legislation provides a great start for children and families. It provides home visiting for families who need support. It also expands the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), which we know has produced good results, as well as helping children in child care with low income working parents. It is an effort to create an integrated high quality continuum in the state. It uses funding from Initiative-502 (I-502) to do this. Early Learning is the best prevention. High quality early learning programs for children birth to age 5 will lead to a number of benefits for children as they prepare to go to school and later in life. These include financial savings, improved achievements in school, higher graduation rates, and reductions in the use of the criminal justice system. These are targeted investments. Communities that are already doing this work are seeing remarkable results. Anacortes is a good example of a program like this improving readiness for Kindergarten. Low child care subsidies make it difficult for providers to stay in business. Children are in care eight to 10 hours a day, and access to high quality care reduces services that would need to be provided by the state. The subsidy increase will make early investments possible and allow providers to succeed in this program. The number of providers accepting subsidized care has been almost cut in half since 2010. Many centers have closed their doors to subsidized children. The 10 percent subsidy increase would help make accepting subsidized children a viable business decision.

At the time one girl started the ECEAP she was severely developmentally delayed and only spoke a few words, and she was stubborn and angry. Because of the therapy the ECEAP staff connected the family with, her behavior turned around 180 degrees. By the end of the year she was a new child; she is now in a regular classroom, rather than a special education room. The ECEAP should be available to all the families who need it. This legislation is a crime prevention bill. It assists children and families and will lead to less crime in the future, as well as being a benefit to taxpayers. The funding to implement the improvements comes from I-502. There is no better use of the revenue from I-502 than for youngsters enrolled in these programs. The private schools of Washington would like to be added to the task force created in the bill.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying (Early Learning & Human Services): Representative Kagi, prime sponsor; Luara Wells, Casey Salisbury, John Tunheim, and Bob Berg, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids; Martha Banda and Charity Edwards; Claire Wilson, Puget Sound Educational Service District; Steve Leahy and Cathy Lombardo, America's Edge; Lisa Conley, Child Care Resources; Jeanette Spiegelburg, Centrelia College, Children's Lab School; Leslie Dozono, Early Learning Action Alliance; and Amy Blondin, Department of Early Learning.

Persons Testifying (Appropriations): Representative Kagi, prime sponsor; Frank Ordway, League of Education Voters; Edie Choate; Elizabeth Grillett; Laura Wells, Fight Crime:

Invest in Kids; John Snaza, Thurston County Sheriff; and Suzie Hanson, Washington Federation of Independent Schools.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Early Learning & Human Services): Guyanthy Paramore; and Kayle Troester.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Appropriations): None.