

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2716

As Reported by House Committee On:
Early Learning & Human Services
Appropriations

Title: An act relating to working connections child care eligibility for vulnerable children.

Brief Description: Concerning working connections child care eligibility for vulnerable children.

Sponsors: Representatives Senn, Walsh, Kagi, Walkinshaw, McCabe, Ortiz-Self, Bergquist, Stanford, Gregerson, Ormsby and Goodman.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Early Learning & Human Services: 1/26/16, 1/27/16 [DPS];
Appropriations: 2/9/16 [DPS(ELHS)].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Directs the Department of Early Learning to adopt rules that would allow children to be eligible for Working Connections Child Care under the vulnerable child eligibility category if they have received either Child Protective Services child care or Child Welfare Services child care within the prior six months and the case has been closed by the Department of Social and Health Services.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & HUMAN SERVICES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Senn, Vice Chair; Walsh, Ranking Minority Member; Dent, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Hawkins, Kilduff, McCaslin, Ortiz-Self, Sawyer, Scott and Walkinshaw.

Staff: Ashley Paintner (786-7120).

Background:

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.

Working Connections Child Care.

The Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) program offers subsidies to child care providers serving families at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. The state pays a portion of the cost of child care. The parents or caregivers are responsible for making a copayment to the child care provider. The Department of Early Learning (DEL) sets child care subsidy policy and provides the WCCC program oversight for child care licensing. The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) helps families apply for WCCC, determines eligibility and parent or caregiver copayments, authorizes child care, and issues payment to providers. Beginning July 1, 2016, authorizations for the WCCC program must be effective for a 12-month enrollment period, and the child may not be deemed ineligible due to a change in circumstance.

Child Protective Services Child Care and Child Welfare Services Child Care.

The DSHS administers several child care subsidy programs including Child Protective Services (CPS) child care and Child Welfare Services (CWS) child care. The CPS child care subsidy program provides short-term, time-limited subsidized child care for families that are currently involved in a CPS investigation by the Children's Administration (CA). The CPS child care subsidy must end when the case is no longer classified as a CPS case or is transferred to another program.

The CWS child care subsidy program provides short-term, time-limited subsidized child care for families to avoid out-of-home placement or other state intervention. The CA may authorize CWS child care for a family that has been through a CPS investigation and continues to participate with voluntary services, or for a family in crisis that needs care to avoid out-of-home placement or other state intervention.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

By December 1, 2017, the DEL must adopt rules, in accordance with federal law, that would allow a child to be eligible for WCCC under the vulnerable child eligibility category if they have received either CPS or CWS child care within the prior six months and the case with the DSHS has closed. The DEL must develop a definition of "protective services" that would only apply for the purposes of WCCC eligibility and would not require the DSHS or the DEL to automatically consider these children to officially be in CPS. Additionally, the DEL must adopt rules that clarify that the DSHS's involvement with the family ends for purposes of CPS at the time the CPS case is closed.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill removes the population of children who have reunified with their biological family from an out-of-home placement within the past six months from the vulnerable child eligibility category for the WCCC. Additionally, the substitute bill clarifies that children are eligible for the WCCC if they have received either CPS or CWS child care within the prior six months.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Preliminary fiscal note available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect December 1, 2017.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) In 2014 the Legislature passed the Early Start Act, which required the WCCC authorizations to be effective for 12 months, even if the child's parents experience a change in employment or other circumstance that may affect eligibility. Children that receive CPS or CWS child care are no longer eligible for these programs once the case is closed with the DSHS. The bill before you today allows these children to continue in-state subsidized child care programs for a minimum of 12 months, which will help provide much needed stability to a group of highly vulnerable kids.

A large number of the children in the child welfare system are under the age of 5 and therefore in critical periods of their brain development. Despite their young age, these children have often experienced significant trauma and numerous adverse childhood experiences. The research for continuity of care for all children demonstrates that it enhances behavior, education, and personal outcomes. Many families in the child welfare system face significant barriers to building a healthy and stable foundation for their children. Continuous, stable, and high-quality child care will help close the opportunity gap for the children farthest from opportunity. The bill would allow a highly vulnerable group of children to be served in the WCCC and to take advantage of the benefits of high-quality child care.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Senn, prime sponsor; Nancy Ashley, Children's Home Society of Washington State; Alise Hegle, Washington State Parent Allies Coalition; Laurie Lippold, Partners for Our Children; Melissa Johnson, Washington State Association of Head Start and ECEAP Programs; and Jennifer Jennings-Shaffer, Children's Alliance.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill by Committee on Early Learning & Human Services be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 21 members: Representatives Dunshee, Chair; Ormsby, Vice Chair; Cody, Dent, Fitzgibbon, Hansen, Harris, Hudgins, S. Hunt, Jinkins, Kagi, Lytton, MacEwen, Pettigrew, Robinson, Sawyer, Senn, Springer, Sullivan, Tharinger and Walkinshaw.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Chandler, Ranking Minority Member; Wilcox, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Buys, Haler, Magendanz, Schmick, Taylor and Van Werven.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Parker, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Condotta and Stokesbary.

Staff: Melissa Palmer (786-7388).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee On Appropriations Compared to Recommendation of Committee On Early Learning & Human Services:

No new changes were recommended.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect on December 1, 2017.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) There is strong interest in addressing the stability needs of the vulnerable population covered in this bill by providing access to 12 months of child care. The Early Start Act of 2015 provides 12-month eligibility for Working Connections Child Care to recipients. However, children who receive child care while involved in child welfare often lose services when their child welfare involvement ends. These children are in the child welfare system because there are concerns about safety in the homes and have often experienced trauma. This bill would enable the vulnerable and young population who receive child care through Children's Administration to have the benefit of stability by making them eligible for Working Connections Child Care.

The Child Protective Services child care subsidy is helpful when children are transitioned back home. Often losing child care can force people to stop attending classes or prevent people from joining the workforce. Currently, many families in child welfare do not have access to child care after their case is closed. These families are at risk of reentering the system and having longer reliance on government programs. Continuity of child care can help children develop their executive functions, while providing stability. This does not require families to use child care, it just allows the family to be eligible for the child care services.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Laurie Lippold, Partners for Our Children; Alise Hogle, Children's Home Society of Washington; and Melissa Johnson, Washington State Association of Headstart Early Childhood Education and Assistance Programs.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.