
Appropriations Committee

SSB 5999

Brief Description: Addressing the caseload forecast council.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senator Darneille).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the Caseload Forecast Council (CFC) to forecast the populations of children eligible for and served by the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP).
- Requires the CFC to prepare the first ECEAP forecast in time to facilitate development of the Governor's budget for the 2016 legislative session
- Removes the requirement that the CFC provide a courtesy forecast of the population eligible for Essential Needs and Housing Support.
- Removes the requirement that the Department of Early Learning and the Office of Financial Management review early learning forecasts and report to the Governor and Legislature.

Hearing Date: 3/16/15

Staff: Rachelle Harris (786-7137).

Background:

Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program.

The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) is a preschool program administered by the Department of Early Learning (DEL) that provides early education support for eligible children and their families. The ECEAP is open to families with children not yet eligible for kindergarten when the family's income is at or below 110 percent of the federal poverty level. When there are more eligible children than available ECEAP slots, children are placed on a waitlist. In 2013 Senate Bill 5904 required expansion of the ECEAP to serve all eligible children by the 2018-2019 school year, at which point the program will be considered an

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entitlement. The DEL and the Office of Financial Management (OFM) prepare and review the caseload for the program annually. The DEL and the OFM report to the Governor and the Legislature about funding strategies to phase in funding to achieve statewide implementation by 2018-19.

Caseload Forecast Council Forecasts.

The Caseload Forecast Council (CFC) is responsible for preparing and approving official state caseloads that project the populations expected to meet entitlement requirements and services. Caseloads are prepared for the following:

- public assistance programs;
- state correctional institutions;
- state correctional non-institutional supervision;
- state institutions for juvenile offenders;
- public school system;
- long-term care;
- medical assistance;
- foster care;
- adoption support; and
- the Washington College Bound Scholarship Program.

Essential Needs and Housing Support.

The Essential Needs and Housing Support (ENHS) program was established in 2011. Administered by the Department of Commerce, the program provides non-cash housing and other assistance for some individuals who do not have gainful employment for at least 90 days by reason of mental or physical incapacity. Eligibility for the program is determined by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). Appropriations for the program are based on a courtesy forecast prepared by the CFC based on the Medical Care Services (MCS) population that is homeless. Medical Care Services is another state-funded program that provides medical benefits for individuals who are incapacitated from gainful employment for at least 90 days by reason of mental or physical incapacity. The ENHS is funded by the Legislature as a block grant that Commerce distributes to counties.

Summary of Bill:

The CFC must prepare and approve a forecast of the children eligible for and the number of children actually served by the ECEAP. The CFC must provide the first of these forecasts in time to facilitate the Governor's budget development for the 2016 legislative session. This same requirement is removed from the responsibilities of the DEL and the OFM.

The CFC is no longer required to provide a courtesy forecast of the population eligible for the ENHS program.

The list of entities from which the CFC may request data and assistance is expanded to include the DEL, the Department of Corrections, the Health Care Authority, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Washington Student Achievement Council, and other agencies with caseloads forecasted by the CFC.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available. New fiscal note requested on March 10, 2015.

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