

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6279

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As of January 29, 2016

**Title:** An act relating to the caseload forecast council.

**Brief Description:** Addressing the caseload forecast council.

**Sponsors:** Senators Hill and Darneille; by request of Office of Financial Management.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Ways & Means: 1/25/16.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

**Staff:** Sandy Stith (786-7710)

**Background:** Health Benefit Exchange. The Washington Health Benefit Exchange (HBE) was established in 2011 as a self-sustaining public-private partnership separate and distinct from the state. Beginning January 1, 2014, HBE operates consistent with the Affordable Care Act subject to statutory authorization. HBE is governed by a nine-person board consisting of persons with expertise in the Washington health care system and private and public health care coverage.

Beginning January 1, 2014, monies collected from taxpayers for premiums written on qualified health benefit plans and stand-alone dental plans offered through the HBE are deposited in the HBE dedicated account.

Early Achievers Program. In 2007, the quality rating and improvement system for the early care and education system in Washington was created, called Early Achievers. The Early Achievers program establishes a common set of expectations and standards that define, measure, and improve the quality of early learning and child care settings. The Department of Early Learning (DEL) completed statewide implementation of the Early Achievers program in July 2013.

There are five levels in the Early Achievers program. Licensed or certified child care programs enter the program at level 1. Participants advance to level 2 when they officially enroll in the Early Achievers program. At level 2, participants are required to complete several activities such as a self-assessment and trainings. For levels 3-5 participants are evaluated and earn points in the following areas: child outcomes; facility curriculum,

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learning environment, and interaction; professional development and training; and family engagement and partnership. At levels 3, 4, and 5, Early Achievers program participants are evaluated and assigned a rating. The Early Achievers program provides participants with coaching, training opportunities, professional development scholarships and grants, technical assistance, and consultation.

Working Connections. 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 part of the cost of child care. Both child care centers and family home providers are able to receive WCCC subsidy payments. 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 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 helps families apply for WCCC, determines eligibility and parent or caregiver copayments, authorizes child care, and issues payment to providers.

Beginning July 1, 2016, WCCC subsidies are effective for 12 months. Existing child care providers receiving state subsidies must enroll in the Early Achievers program by August 1, 2016, complete level 2 activities by August 1, 2017, and rate level 3 or higher by December 31, 2019, to be eligible for state subsidies. Any remedial activities for providers not meeting level 3 must be completed June 30, 2020. New child care providers receiving state subsidies must enroll in the Early Achievers program within 30 days of the initial subsidy payment, complete level 2 activities within 12 months of enrollment in the program, and rate level 3 within 30 months. Any remedial activities for providers not meeting level 3 must be completed within 6 months of the beginning of remedial activities.

Caseload Forecast Council. The Caseload Forecast Council is responsible for developing forecasts for the changing caseloads in state entitlement programs. The caseload forecast is formally adopted by a council of six individuals, two appointed by the Governor and four appointed by the two largest political caucuses in the Senate and the House of Representatives. Caseload forecasts adopted by the council, along with any unofficial forecasts, are submitted to the Governor and the members of the legislative fiscal committees to facilitate budget development.

**Summary of Bill:** The Caseload Forecast Council is required to forecast the following:

- non-Medicaid persons enrolled in qualified health plans or dental plans offered by the Health Benefit Exchange; and,
- early achiever quality award and tiered reimbursement, levels 2 through 5, for the Working Connections Child Care, seasonal child care, and homeless child care programs.

Forecasts for these programs will be available to facilitate budget development proposals by the Governor for the 2017 legislative session.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: Adding these new items to the forecast should improve information for the Governor's budget and the deliberations for a budget that ultimately gets passed.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Scott Merriman, Office of Financial Management

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.