

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6598

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Early Learning & K-12 Education, February 4, 2016

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: Senators Rivers, Billig, Litzow and McAuliffe.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/04/16 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Litzow, Chair; Dammeier, Vice Chair; McAuliffe, Ranking Member; Billig, Fain, Hill, Mullet, Rivers and Rolfes.

Staff: Ailey Kato (786-7434)

Background: Working Connections Child Care (WCCC). This program offers subsidies to childcare providers serving families at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. The state pays part of the cost of childcare when a parent is employed, self-employed, or meets the requirements for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families or WorkFirst programs. The family is responsible for making a copayment to the childcare provider.

The Department of Early Learning (DEL) sets childcare subsidy policy and provides WCCC oversight for childcare licensing and early learning services. The Department of Social Health Services (DSHS) helps families apply for WCCC, determines eligibility and consumer copayments, authorizes child care, and pays providers. Both childcare centers and family home providers are able to receive WCCC subsidy payments. Beginning July 1, 2016, authorizations for the WCCC subsidy must be effective for 12 months even if there is a change of circumstances.

Child Protective Services (CPS) Child Care and Child Welfare Services (CWS) Child Care. DSHS administers several child care subsidy programs including CPS and CWS child care. CPS child care provides short-term, time-limited, subsidized child care for families that are

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currently involved in a CPS investigation by Children's Administration. The CPS child care subsidy must end when the case is no longer classified as a CPS case or is transferred to another program.

CWS child care provides short-term, time-limited, subsidized child care for families to avoid out-of-home placement or other state intervention.

Summary of Bill: DEL must adopt rules, in accordance with federal law, that would require that a child is eligible for WCCC if the child has received CPS child care or CWS child care within the prior six months and the response DSHS initiated pursuant to state law has concluded.

A definition of protective services would only apply for the purposes of WCCC eligibility and would not require DSHS or DEL to automatically consider these children to be in official child protective services under state law. These children must not be identified as needing a response by DSHS or intervention by DEL, except in cases where that is appropriate for reasons other than the inclusion of the child in the new category of vulnerable child for purposes of WCCC eligibility.

DSHS's involvement with the family referred for WCCC ends for purposes of child protective services at the time that the response of DSHS initiated pursuant to state law has concluded.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 28, 2016.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill will provide continuity of care for children who are going through a difficult time and for parents who need extra assistance. This child care would help parents attend to important needs to stabilize their lives. Children, who have had a lot of disruption in their lives, can develop a healing relationship with their child care provider. Providing stability for vulnerable children can avoid costly interventions in the future. This bill fills a gap in the Early Start Act and would extend continuity of care to the most vulnerable children. The system and payment structure stood in the way of these children benefiting from 12-month authorization of child care.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Rivers, prime sponsor; Emily Murphy, Children's Alliance, Early Learning Action Alliance; Nancy Ashley, citizen; Alise Hegle, citizen; Laurie Lippold, Partners for Our Children; Melissa Johnson, Washington State Association of Headstart and ECEAP Programs; Alex Hur, SEIU 925.

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