

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1624

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, Dent, Kagi, Lytton, Farrell, Pettigrew, Hudgins, Goodman, Frame and Slatter.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Early Learning & Human Services: 2/1/17, 2/7/17 [DP];

Appropriations: 2/20/17, 2/21/17 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Allows families with children who are residing with the parent or legal guardian and have received child welfare services, child protective services, or a family assessment response in the previous six months to qualify for Working Connections Child Care.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & HUMAN SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Senn, Vice Chair; Dent, Ranking Minority Member; McDonald, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Frame, Goodman, Griffey, Kilduff, Klippert, Lovick, Muri and Ortiz-Self.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative McCaslin.

Staff: Dawn Eychaner (786-7135).

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.

The Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) program is a subsidized childcare program funded through federal Child Care and Development Funds (CCDF) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). The Department of Early Learning (DEL) is the designated lead agency for administration of the CCDF program and sets policy for the WCCC.

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) determines eligibility for the WCCC and issues childcare subsidy payments to providers. In general, in order to qualify for the WCCC, a family must have a household income at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level and be working or participating in WorkFirst activities.

Families participating in the WCCC may receive up to 12 months of subsidized childcare and may pay a monthly copayment, depending on the family's income level. A child may not be deemed ineligible during the 12-month period due to a change in the family's circumstances.

Up to 33,000 households may receive WCCC services at any given time. If the WCCC participation reaches the paid caseload maximum of 33,000 households, the DSHS will implement a wait list. In the event of a wait list, certain groups will receive priority access to the WCCC. These groups include families receiving TANF benefits, children with special needs, and children experiencing homelessness, among others.

The DSHS provides child welfare services designed to ensure child safety, achieve permanency, and strengthen families. Child welfare services can include voluntary and in-home services, out-of-home care, case management, and other services. Child Protective Services (CPS) is responsible for investigating reported allegations of child abuse or neglect. Reports with low or moderately low risk allegations may receive a Family Assessment Response (FAR) as an alternative to a CPS investigation.

Summary of Bill:

Beginning December 1, 2018, the DEL must implement policies to allow 12 months of the WCCC eligibility for families with children who:

- are residing with a biological parent or guardian;
- have received child protective services, child welfare services, or a FAR from the DSHS in the previous six months; and
- have a childcare referral as part of the family's case management plan.

A child does not need to continue to receive DSHS services in order to maintain the WCCC eligibility for the full 12 months.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Preliminary fiscal note available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on December 1, 2018.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Suddenly ending child care for families receiving a subsidy can have lasting effects. Parents often lose subsidized child care once their CPS case is closed, which makes it more challenging to maintain a job and housing. The majority of families receiving child welfare services from the DSHS have experienced trauma and challenging systemic barriers. This bill will fill a critical gap that families face when they are reunified with their children, but their case with the DSHS has been closed. These families still have a need for services and safe, reliable child care. These are some of our most vulnerable children, and this bill looks at the needs of these children.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Senn, prime sponsor; Alise Hegle, Parent Advocacy Committee; Sophia Byrd McSherry, Washington State Office of Public Defense; Joel Ryan, Washington State Association of Headstart and Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program; Melanie Smith, Wellspring Family Services; and Emily Murphy, Children's Alliance.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 24 members: Representatives Ormsby, Chair; Robinson, Vice Chair; MacEwen, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Stokesbary, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Caldier, Cody, Fitzgibbon, Hansen, Harris, Hudgins, Jinkins, Kagi, Lytton, Manweller, Pettigrew, Pollet, Sawyer, Senn, Springer, Stanford, Sullivan, Tharinger and Volz.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Chandler, Ranking Minority Member; Buys, Condotta, Haler, Nealey, Schmick, Taylor, Vick and Wilcox.

Staff: Kelci Karl-Robinson (786-7116).

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

A null and void clause is added, making the bill null and void unless funded in the budget.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect on December 1, 2018. However, the bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Many families lose child care after their case is closed and they are more likely to end up back in the system or have prolonged involvement in social services at a cost to the state. High quality care for disadvantaged children prepares them for school and boosts the economy by paying dividends to families and taxpayers. Early childhood investments yield 7 to 10 percent return through improved education, health, and social outcomes. The return on state investment is not realized unless the care is high quality. A critical aspect of high quality care is the continuity of care, which allows the development of relationships with adult caregivers. Children involved in the child protection services and child welfare system are the most in need of continuity of care, but are not eligible for 12 months of child care authorization. The bill would break down the barrier to access continuity of care, increase school readiness, reduce kindergarten through grade 12 remediation, and provide a return on investment for the state.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Kristina Jorgensen, Washington State Parent Advocacy Committee; and Ryan Pricco, Child Care Aware of Washington.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.