

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2764

As Reported by House Committee On: Higher Education

Title: An act relating to improving access and completion for students at public institutions of higher education, especially at community and technical colleges, by removing restrictions on subsidized child care.

Brief Description: Concerning child care for student parents in public institutions of higher education.

Sponsors: Representatives Pollet, Griffey, Senn, Reeves, Kloba, Stanford, Kagi, Stonier, Appleton, Goodman, Gregerson, Kilduff, Doglio, Peterson, Tharinger, Frame, Slatter and Stambaugh.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 1/23/18, 1/31/18 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the Department of Early Learning (Department) to eliminate the work requirements in its rules for non-WorkFirst recipients of Working Connections Child Care benefits who are full-time students.
- Requires the Department to revise its rules regarding the types of certificate and degree programs that recipients of Working Connections Child Care benefits may pursue, to include certificate and degrees in early childhood education and paraeducation.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Hansen, Chair; Pollet, Vice Chair; Holy, Ranking Minority Member; Van Werven, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Haler, Orwall, Sells, Stambaugh and Tarleton.

Staff: Trudes Tango (786-7384).

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.

Background:

The Working Connections Child Care Program.

The Working Connections Child Care Program (WCCC) 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 (Department) is the designated lead agency for administration of the CCDF program and sets policy for WCCC. The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) determines eligibility for WCCC and issues childcare subsidy payments to providers. On July 1, 2018, all powers, duties, and functions of the Department will be transferred to the Department of Children, Youth, and Families.

In general, in order to qualify for 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 approved activities, or enrolled in an educational program. Approved activities may include WorkFirst program activities such as on-the-job-training, job search, and vocational educational training. For consumers who are not participating in WorkFirst, the applicant or consumer must be working or enrolled in an educational program. Families participating in WCCC may pay a monthly co-payment, depending on the family's income level.

The Working Connections Child Care Program Eligibility Based on Educational Enrollment.

The WCCC rules provide specific guidelines for WCCC eligibility based on enrollment in an educational program. An applicant or consumer who is 22 years or older is limited to up to 36 months of WCCC benefits during the consumer's lifetime for participation in vocational education. An applicant or consumer must also work an average of 20 or more hours per week or work an average of 16 or more hours per week of paid federal or state work-study.

The vocational education program must lead to a degree or certificate in a specific occupation and be offered by the following accredited entities only: a public and private technical college or school; a community college; or a tribal college.

The WCCC benefits will cover the student's hours of employment—including travel time, the hours of class time, and up to 10 hours per week for study time for approved classes. Approved classes include classroom, labs, online class, and unpaid internships required by the vocational educational program.

The 2017-19 Operating Budget limited the WCCC caseload to a monthly average of 33,000 households. In the event of a wait list, certain groups will receive priority access to WCCC. These groups include families receiving TANF benefits, children with special needs, and children experiencing homelessness, among others.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

By January 1, 2019, the Department must revise its rules that require non-WorkFirst applicants or consumers who are full-time students to work at least an average of 20 or more hours per week or at least an average of 16 or more hours per week of work-study, as a

condition of receiving WCCC benefits. The rules must be revised to eliminate the work requirements as a condition of receiving WCCC benefits. An applicant or consumer is a full-time student if he or she meets the institution's definition of full-time student.

The Department must also revise its rules regarding the types of certificate and degree programs that applicants or consumers may pursue while receiving WCCC benefits, to include certificate and degrees in early childhood education and paraeducation.

The bill is not intended to change how applicants or consumers are prioritized when placed on a wait list for WCCC benefits and does not require a community or technical college to expand any of its existing childcare facilities. Any additional childcare services provided as a result of the act must be provided within existing resources and existing facilities. The Department must consult with the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges in revising its rules.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill added provisions to: (1) specify that the requirement to revise rules applies to rules governing full-time student enrolled in community and technical colleges or tribal colleges, and that a student is considered full-time if the student meets the institution's definition of "full-time student;" (2) specify that the bill is not intended to change how applicants or consumers are prioritized when placed on a wait list for WCCC; (3) remove the requirement that the Department allow applicants and consumers to pursue certificates and degrees in teaching; and (4) make it explicit that the bill does not require a community or technical college to expand any of its existing childcare facilities and that any additional childcare services provided as a result of the bill must be provided within existing resources and existing facilities.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Preliminary fiscal note available. New fiscal note requested on February 1, 2018.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: This bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed, except for section 3, relating to codification of the WCCC program in the statutes for the Department of Children, Youth, and Families, which takes effect July 1, 2018, and section 4, relating to codification of the WCCC program in the statutes for the Department of Children, Youth, and Families, which takes effect on December 1, 2018.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The state policy should be to encourage working parents to earn degrees quickly so they can become self-sufficient and support their families. The work requirement is a huge obstacle for parents. Washington is one of the only states that impose such a strict work requirement on full-time students. Studies show that student parents who are working and

going to school often leave school without earning a credential or take longer to finish. The bill needs to be clarified that it applies only to student parents attending full-time. Student parents are forced to choose between time studying, time spent with their children, and time working. Often the part-time work that is available requires more than 20 hours per week of work. Student parents should be able to pursue a broader range of degrees to help them qualify for better jobs. The on-campus child care at the community and technical colleges are near capacity. If the cap for WCCC were reached and these student parents were wait-listed, they would not be prioritized.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Pollet, prime sponsor; Melissa Johnson, Washington State Association of Head Start, and Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program; John Hurley, Kitsap Community Resources; Maddy Thompson, Washington Student Achievement Council; Cody Eccles, Council of Presidents; Erin Fraiser, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; and Angelica Gonzales.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.