

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5901

As of March 23, 2017

Title: An act relating to eligibility for the working connections child care and early childhood education and assistance programs.

Brief Description: Concerning eligibility for the working connections child care and early childhood education and assistance programs.

Sponsors: Senator Braun.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Ways & Means: 3/21/17.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes that individuals who experience a non-temporary change in their status as working or attending a job training or education program assistance shall be discontinued from the Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) program after a minimum of three months.
- Provides that as a condition of receiving a child care subsidy or a WCCC subsidy, an applicant or recipient must seek child support enforcement services unless the Department of Social and Health Services finds that the applicant or recipient has good cause not to cooperate.
- Entitles three-year olds to be enrolled in the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program, beginning in the 2022-23 school year.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Maria Hovde (786-7474)

Background: Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP). This state-funded, voluntary preschool program serves eligible three- and four-year old children. Children are eligible if they are from a low-income household, eligible for special education due to disability, or impacted by certain risk factors identified by the Department of Early Learning. Children from families with an annual income at or below 110 percent of the federal poverty level—\$26,730 for a family of four—are eligible for enrollment in ECEAP.

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.

Current law requires that state funding continue to be phased in each year until full statewide implementation is achieved in the 2020-21 school year, at which time any eligible child shall be entitled to be enrolled in the program. Additional eligible children may be admitted to the extent that grants and contributions from community sources provide sufficient funds for a program equivalent to that supported by state funds.

Working Connections Child Care (WCCC). This federally- and state-funded program offers subsidies to childcare providers serving families with an income at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level—\$48,600 for a family of four. This program pays part of the cost of childcare when a parent is employed, self-employed, or meets the requirements for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or WorkFirst programs. Pursuant to enactment of ESSHB 1491 (2015), authorizations for WCCC are effective for 12 months.

Division of Child Support (DCS). The DCS, which is within the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), is responsible for administering Washington's child support enforcement program. The DCS provides support enforcement services to parents receiving public assistance and to those non-assistance parents who request support enforcement services.

Summary of Bill: The bill as referred to committee not considered.

Summary of Bill (Proposed Substitute): Working Connections Child Care. Authorizations for the WCCC program shall be effective for 12 months except that for non-temporary changes in the status of a child's parent as working or attending a job training or education program assistance shall be discontinued after a minimum of three months.

As a condition of receiving a child care subsidy or a WCCC subsidy, an applicant or recipient must seek child support enforcement services from the DCS unless DSHS finds that the applicant or recipient has good cause not to cooperate.

Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program. Three-year olds are entitled to be enrolled in ECEAP beginning in the 2022-23 school year.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on March 21, 2017.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Proposed Substitute: CON: This bill reduces the eligibility of a lot of kids that we are trying to target to break the cycle of poverty. This bill would roll back access for three year olds to high quality child care in a program that helps get kids ready for kindergarten. There is a significant benefit to having children involved in preschool for two years. When the Early Start Act passed and provided a 12-month authorization, it was more about focusing on what's needed for the child and the child's

development. This would move back to more paperwork and more bureaucracy and make it more difficult for children to get what they need to be ready for school. When you cut services to three year olds in rural areas, you are cutting the few services that are there. These services tend to be comprehensive and serve a variety of needs in the rural communities. WCCC is a critical support for domestic violence survivors and requiring them to pursue child support is dangerous for them. This bill would add an additional 24,000 screenings that would need to be done and the Community Services Division does not have the capacity to ensure that the good cause waiver is administered properly, which affects safety to the domestic violence survivor community. Child support was implemented in 2011 and it was rescinded in 2012 because of the problems it created. As written, it would require the department to violate tribal agreements, it would add inefficiencies and additional costs, could result in child support payment delays, could put domestic violence survivors in danger, and could cause problems meeting federal requirements.

Persons Testifying: CON: Katy Warren, Washington State Association of Headstart & ECEAP; Matthew Solomon, ESD 113; Carey Morris, WA State Coalition Against Domestic Violence; Katie Nelson, WA Federation of State Employees; Paul Berendt, SCAN.

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