

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6419

As of January 31, 2018

Title: An act relating to promoting access to the Washington early childhood education and assistance program.

Brief Description: Concerning access to the Washington early childhood education and assistance program.

Sponsors: Senators Rolfes, Zeiger, Billig, Wellman, Conway, Darneille, Kuderer, Palumbo and Walsh.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/30/18.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Adds homeless children as an eligibility category for the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP).
- Allows 25 percent, rather than 10 percent, of children enrolled in ECEAP to be eligible under agency rules instead of being categorically eligible.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Ailey Kato (786-7434)

Background: ECEAP. This state-funded voluntary preschool program serves eligible children ages three and four. An eligible child is a child not eligible for kindergarten and:

- whose family income is at or below 110 percent of the federal poverty level—\$27,060 for a family of four; or
- is eligible for special education.

Other children may be eligible under rules adopted by the Department of Early Learning (DEL) if the number of such children equals not more than 10 percent of enrollment in the program.

Current DEL rules provide that an eligible child may be from a family with income that exceeds 110 percent of the federal poverty level if the child is impacted by specific

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developmental or environmental risk factors that are linked by research to school performance.

State law provides that priority for enrollment must be given to children from families with the lowest income, children in foster care, or to eligible children from families with multiple needs. Current DEL rules also prioritize children who are four years old or homeless.

State law requires that state funding continue to be phased in each year until full statewide implementation is achieved in the 2022-23 school year, at which time any eligible child shall be entitled to be enrolled in the program.

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) will administer ECEAP starting on July 1, 2018.

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. This federal act provides federal grant funding to support school districts that serve homeless students.

Summary of Bill: A child who is homeless is added as an eligibility category for ECEAP. Homeless means without a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence as set forth in the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

Other children, who are not categorically eligible for ECEAP, may be eligible under rules adopted by DCYF if the number of such children equals not more than 25 percent, rather than 10 percent, of enrollment in ECEAP.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 19, 2018.

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: PRO: This bill solves an issue for parts of the state, including more rural areas, where there are some ECEAP seats that are not filled and are moved to other areas of the state. The income threshold for ECEAP is very low. This bill would give providers flexibility to invite children who are just above the income threshold but would greatly benefit from the program. These children may experience trauma, adverse childhood experiences, and other risk factors. ECEAP can help prepare these children for kindergarten.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Christine Rolfes, Prime Sponsor; Melissa Johnson, Washington State Association of Headstart, ECEAP; Alicia Brender, Bellevue School District Early Learning; Kevin Rutherford, citizen; Mary Rushton, Centralia College ECEAP.

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