
Human Services & Early Learning Committee

HB 1351

Brief Description: Expanding eligibility to the early childhood education and assistance program.

Sponsors: Representatives Goodman, Senn, Callan, Lovick, Frame, Ortiz-Self, Kilduff, Appleton, Dolan, Stanford, Valdez, Kloba, Doglio, Pollet and Leavitt; by request of Office of the Governor.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows, under certain conditions, children with incomes ranging from 111 percent to 200 percent of the federal poverty level, to enroll in the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP).
- Creates a birth-to-three ECEAP pilot project.

Hearing Date: 1/29/19

Staff: Dawn Eychaner (786-7135).

Background:

Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program.

The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) is the state's voluntary preschool program for three- and four year-olds. The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) administers the ECEAP. The ECEAP provides comprehensive services, sometimes referred to as "wraparound services," that include education, health and nutrition, and family support for participating children and their families.

Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program Eligibility and Entitlement.

Children are eligible for the state-supported ECEAP who are eligible for special education due to a disability or are from families with incomes at or below 110 percent of the federal poverty level

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.

(FPL). Up to 10 percent of the total enrollment in the state-supported program may consist of children who are eligible based on other criteria adopted in rule. Priority for enrollment must be given to children from families with the lowest incomes, children in foster care, or to eligible families with multiple needs.

State funding for the ECEAP is phased in yearly, and eligible children may be admitted to the extent the state provides funds for the program. Full statewide implementation is required by the 2022-23 school year, when any eligible child will be entitled to enroll in the state-supported ECEAP.

Additional Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program Enrollments.

As space is available, the DCYF may allow up to 25 percent of the total statewide ECEAP enrollment to consist of children who have family incomes above 110 percent of the FPL. These children must be either homeless or impacted by specific developmental or environmental risk factors that are linked by research to school performance. Within this group, priority must be given to children experiencing homelessness, child welfare system involvement, or a developmental delay or disability that does not meet the eligibility criteria for special education. Children included in the ECEAP under these eligibility criteria are not considered part of the state-funded entitlement.

Local governments, school districts, institutions of higher education, and nonprofit organizations may use funds from community sources to admit children into the ECEAP programs equivalent to the state-supported program. Children enrolled in these local programs are not considered part of the state-funded entitlement.

HeadStart and Early Head Start.

HeadStart and Early Head Start (EHS) programs are federally funded early learning programs. HeadStart serves three- and four year-olds and EHS serves pregnant women and infants and toddlers under the age of three. The EHS programs provide comprehensive support services that can be delivered through child care centers and family home providers, through home visits to the family, or a combination.

Early Achievers.

Early Achievers is Washington's Quality Rating and Improvement System for child care and early learning. The quality of care is assigned a rating on a scale of 1-5, with Level 1 being the minimum requirements for licensing, and Level 5 being the highest possible level of quality. Participation in Early Achievers is mandatory for all providers serving non-school-age children and accepting state subsidy payments.

Summary of Bill:

Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program Enrollments.

The 25 percent cap on statewide enrollments of children with incomes above 110 percent of the FPL is removed, and the DCYF may enroll children with family incomes ranging from 111 percent of the FPL to 200 percent of the FPL, with no statutory cap on statewide enrollment for this group.

A family with an income ranging from 111-200 percent of the FPL may be required to make a tuition payment directly to the provider. For a child enrolled under this income criterion, the provider must conduct a family assessment to determine which, if any, wraparound services are needed for the child and family. The provider is not required to offer all of the ECEAP services if it is determined that the child and family would not benefit from those services.

The DCYF must adopt rules that include calculations to determine the family's tuition payment, a description of the provider's duties associated with collecting tuition payments, and a description of the process used to determine the wraparound service needs of the child and family.

The DCYF must include outcomes for children and families enrolled under this eligibility criterion in its annual report to the Governor and the Legislature on outcomes for children participating in the ECEAP.

Birth-to-Three Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program Pilot.

A state-funded birth-to-three ECEAP pilot project is established for eligible children under 3 years old. To be eligible, a child must be under 36 months old and have a family income at or below 110 percent of the FPL. The pilot project must be implemented by the DCYF by July 1, 2019, and conclude June 30, 2022.

The DCYF may adopt rules to implement the pilot project and may waive or adopt pilot project requirements when necessary to allow for the operation of the pilot. The DCYF must consider EHS rules and regulations when developing program and provider and family eligibility requirements.

During the pilot, the DCYF must offer at least three home visits to a child or family meeting the eligibility requirements for a home visiting service.

Pilot project programs must meet minimum DCYF licensing standards, be rated at a Level 4 or higher in the Early Achievers program, and provide at least 1,380 annual hours of classroom operations per year. A pilot project classroom must have teacher-child ratios of at least three teachers for every nine children or two teachers for every eight children. Each pilot project location may have up to three classrooms. When selecting pilot project locations, the DCYF must attempt to select a combination of rural, urban, and suburban locations and must prioritize locations with programs currently operating EHS, HeadStart, or the ECEAP.

The DCYF must begin an evaluation to analyze quality and performance measures during the pilot. In the third year of the pilot, the DCYF must analyze child and parent outcomes. Beginning November 1, 2019, the DCYF must submit an annual report to the Governor and the Legislature with a status update describing the pilot project's implementation, the participating programs, and the number of children and families served. The report must also include an identification and explanation of any deviations from EHS standards, rules, and regulations, in the development of the pilot. A final report is due November 1, 2023, that describes findings and recommendations.

Other.

Outdated statutory references are corrected.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 22, 2019.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.