

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1574

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Human Services & Early Learning

**Title:** An act relating to increasing eligibility for child care and early learning programs for homeless and other vulnerable children.

**Brief Description:** Increasing eligibility for child care and early learning programs for homeless and other vulnerable children.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Callan, Eslick, Senn, Caldier, Frame, Dolan, Fey, Wylie, Lovick, Thai, Shewmake, Valdez, Bergquist, Stanford, Doglio, Reeves, Robinson, Cody, Goodman, Lekanoff, Kloba, Slatter, Davis and Macri.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Human Services & Early Learning: 1/29/19, 2/5/19 [DPS].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Establishes categorical eligibility for the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program for homeless and Indian children.
- Requires 12-month authorizations for the Working Connections Child Care program for homeless children.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & EARLY LEARNING

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Senn, Chair; Callan, Vice Chair; Frame, Vice Chair; Dent, Ranking Minority Member; Eslick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; McCaslin, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Corry, Goodman, Griffey, Kilduff, Klippert, Lovick and Ortiz-Self.

**Staff:** Dawn Eychaner (786-7135).

**Background:**

Working Connections Child Care.

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*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 federally and state-funded program that offers subsidies to childcare providers serving families with an income at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty guideline. The parent must be engaged in work or in approved work activities unless the family has received child welfare, child protective, or family assessment response (FAR) services in the previous six months. A consumer eligible at the time of application to the WCCC program may receive up to 12 months of subsidized child care and may not be deemed ineligible during the 12-month period due to a change in the family's circumstances.

Families experiencing homelessness have a four-month grace period to provide verification of participation in approved work activities.

The WCCC program is partially funded by the federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF). The CCDF rules allow states to designate certain vulnerable populations as "in need of protective services." Work and income requirements may be waived for these populations. Washington's definition of protective services includes families who are homeless during the designated four-month grace period, children who are homeless because of a disaster, children receiving FAR services, and children in the parental control of a non-needy relative (NNR). An NNR is an adult relative caring for an eligible child in the absence of a biological, adoptive, or stepparent.

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) is the designated lead agency for administration of the CCDF program and sets policy for the WCCC program. The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) determines eligibility for the WCCC program and authorizes the amount of care a consumer may receive. Effective July 1, 2019, all duties related to the WCCC program will transfer from the DSHS to the DCYF.

#### Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program.

The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) is the state's voluntary preschool program for 3 and 4 year olds. A child is eligible for the state-supported ECEAP who is eligible for special education due to a disability or is from a family with an income at or below 110 percent of the federal poverty level. 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 by the DCYF. Priority for enrollment must be given to children from families with the lowest income, 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.

#### McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento) requires states and public school districts to ensure that children and youth experiencing homelessness have equal access to public education. The McKinney-Vento defines a homeless child or youth as one lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

**Summary of Substitute Bill:**

A child who is an Indian child or is homeless as defined by McKinney-Vento is categorically eligible for the ECEAP. The DCYF must consult with tribal representatives to develop an agreed-upon definition of Indian child for the purposes of the ECEAP and must adopt the definition in rule by July 1, 2020.

The DCYF must designate homeless children as a vulnerable population in need of protective services pursuant to federal CCDF rules. Children who are homeless as defined by McKinney-Vento must be allowed eligibility and 12-month authorizations for the WCCC program.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

The substitute bill adds an Indian child as categorically eligible for the ECEAP and requires the DCYF to consult with tribal representatives to develop an agreed-upon definition of Indian child for the purposes of the ECEAP and adopt the definition in rule by July 1, 2020.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on February 6, 2019.

**Effective Date of Substitute Bill:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) The quality of care is important for young and vulnerable children. There is a gap in the ECEAP for families who are working and are above the income threshold but are not categorically eligible. Families who are homeless at the time they apply for child care often can't find the care within the four-month grace period allowed in the WCCC program, and going out and finding a job is difficult if quality child care is not available. Homelessness has negative impacts beyond poverty and income levels. The ECEAP outcome reports indicate there are nearly four homeless children enrolled in each ECEAP location. The younger a child is and the longer they experience homelessness, the greater the cumulative toll and negative outcomes. The ECEAP supports not just the child, but the whole family and connects families to support services to improve security and stability. Aligning eligibility between the ECEAP and the WCCC program will make it easier for providers to braid funding and serve both groups. Last year more than 800 homeless children were over-income for the ECEAP, and 185 homeless families are currently on wait lists.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Representative Callan, prime sponsor; Katara Jordan, Building Changes; Melanie Smith, Wellspring Family Services; and Katy Warren, Washington State Association of Head Start and Early Childhood Education Assistance Program.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.**