
Human Services & Early Learning Committee

HB 2556

Brief Description: Providing regulatory relief for early learning providers.

Sponsors: Representatives Dent, Corry, Eslick, Caldier, Klippert, Jenkin, Griffey, McCaslin, Mosbrucker, Gildon, Dufault and Tharinger.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes a fundamentals of instruction program for early learning providers to meet professional education requirements.
- Creates a cost of child care regulations work group.

Hearing Date: 1/28/20

Staff: Dawn Eychaner (786-7135).

Background:

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) regulates child care licensing and administers a quality rating and improvement system for early learning programs called Early Achievers (EA). Providers accepting state subsidy and caring for nonschool age children are required to participate in the EA program and meet certain rating levels by statutory deadlines.

Foundational Quality Standards for Early Learning.

In 2018 the DCYF adopted new foundational quality standards for early learning that updated licensing standards for child care and the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP). The licensing standards are required to provide minimum health and safety standards for child care and preschool programs, rely on the standards established by the EA program to address quality issues, take into account the separate needs of family care providers and child care centers, and promote the continued safety of child care centers.

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.

Under the standards, early learning providers must meet new education requirements or the equivalent by 2024 or within five years of the provider's date of hire if hired after August 2019. New requirements include earning an initial, short, or full state Early Childhood Education Certificate (ECE) for most positions. To earn an initial ECE requires 12 college credits; the short ECE requires 20 credits; and the full state ECE requires 47 credits.

In early 2019 the DCYF received recommendations from an Equivalencies Workgroup related to developing equivalencies to meet education requirements. The recommendations for education equivalents included establishing a process for providers to demonstrate competency and identifying alternate credentials.

Child Care and Development Fund Professional Development Requirements.

The federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) is the primary funding source for subsidized child care. The CCDF rules outline basic requirements for early learning provider training and professional development. States have flexibility how they meet these requirements, but must offer ongoing, accessible professional development, aligned to a progression of professional development that:

1. maintains and updates health and safety training standards;
2. incorporates the state's early learning and development guidelines, where applicable;
3. incorporates social-emotional behavior intervention models for children birth through school age;
4. to the extent practicable, is appropriate for populations of children that include different age groups, English learners, children with developmental delays and disabilities, and Native Americans;
5. to the extent practicable, awards continuing education units or is credit-bearing; and
6. is accessible to caregivers, teachers, and directors supported by tribes that receive CCDF funding.

Summary of Bill:

Fundamentals of Instruction Program.

The DCYF must implement a fundamentals of instruction program for early learning providers. The instruction program must provide the training necessary for early learning providers to meet professional education requirements for licensure. When designing and implementing the instruction program, the DCYF must solicit feedback from early learning providers statewide.

The instruction program must be provided in an accessible, affordable manner and be made available online and as a community-based training opportunity. The instruction program curriculum must emphasize the role of a classroom teacher in a child's learning and development and must meet federal CCDF professional development requirements. The curriculum and exam must be inclusive of a variety of learning levels, languages, and abilities.

The DCYF must report annually, beginning November 1, 2020, to the Governor and the Legislature on the instruction program participation rates and results.

Minimum Licensing Standards.

The DCYF may not apply the early learning core competencies or EA quality standards to the minimum standards for child care licensing. Licensed family day care and center providers who do not accept state subsidy must comply with health and safety requirements only.

Cost of Child Care Regulations Work Group.

The Cost of Child Care Regulations Work Group (Work Group) is established to study the financial impacts of licensing regulations on child care businesses and the direct and indirect costs and benefits to child care providers that are associated with participation in the EA program. The study must include an analysis of licensing and EA requirements that may have a disproportionate economic impact on child care businesses located in rural areas.

The Secretary of the DCYF must convene the first Work Group meeting by July 1, 2020, and the DCYF must provide staff support to the Work Group. The Work Group must meet at least five times by November 30, 2020, and must convene at least two of the five meetings in eastern Washington.

The Work Group consists of the following 12 members:

- Three licensed family home child care providers selected by a statewide organization representing the interests of family child care providers. At least one of these providers must provide care for children of agricultural workers, speak Spanish as a first language, or be located in eastern Washington.
- Three licensed child care center providers selected by a statewide organization representing the interests of licensed child care centers. At least one of these providers must provide care for children of agricultural workers, speak Spanish as a first language, or be located in eastern Washington.
- Two foster parents selected by a statewide organization solely focused on supporting foster parents. At least one foster parent must reside in eastern Washington.
- Four legislators, consisting of two members of the House of Representatives representing each of the two largest caucuses in the House, and two Senators representing each of the two largest caucuses in the Senate.

The Work Group must elect one legislator and one citizen member to serve as co-chairs.

The Work Group may seek input and collaborate with other parties, including contracting with additional persons with technical expertise if such expertise is necessary. The Work Group may only enter into such a contract if funding is appropriated for this specific purpose.

The Work Group must submit findings and recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature by December 15, 2020, and expires June 30, 2021.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 21, 2020.

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