

HOUSE BILL REPORT

2SSB 5820

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: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Nguyen, Randall, Hasegawa, Keiser, Hunt, Kuderer and Wilson, C.).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Human Services & Early Learning: 3/19/19, 3/27/19 [DPA].

**Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill
(As Amended by Committee)**

- Requires 12-month authorizations for the Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) program for homeless children.
- Allows WCCC program eligibility for minor parents meeting education requirements.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & EARLY LEARNING

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Senn, Chair; Callan, Vice Chair; Frame, Vice Chair; Goodman, Kilduff, Lovick and Ortiz-Self.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Dent, Ranking Minority Member; Eslick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; McCaslin, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Corry, Griffey and Klippert.

Staff: Dawn Eychaner (786-7135).

Background:

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.

Working Connections Child Care.

The Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) program offers subsidies to childcare providers serving families with household incomes at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty guideline. The applicant 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. An eligible WCCC program applicant must receive an authorization for 12 months of child care subsidy and may not be deemed ineligible during the 12-month period due to a change in the family's circumstances. Depending on household size and income, the family may be required to pay a copayment to the child care provider. The minimum copayment is \$15 per month.

Families experiencing homelessness have a four-month grace period to provide verification of participation in approved activities or employment. For a minor parent, approved activities may include satisfactory attendance at a high school or a high school equivalency program.

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 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.

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 Amended Bill:

The DCYF must allow WCCC program eligibility for homeless families with household incomes at or below 85 percent of the state median income (SMI). These families must be allowed a 12-month grace period in which to provide:

- verification of employment or participation in approved program activities; or
- payment or payment plan arrangements for any outstanding copayment.

A homeless family may not receive a grace period authorization if the family received such an authorization in the 12 months prior to the application or reapplication. "Homeless" is defined as consistent with the McKinney-Vento.

Beginning October 1, 2019, the DCYF must allow WCCC program eligibility for a minor parent who is attending high school or working toward completing a General Educational Development program. The minor must have a household income of no more than 85 percent of the SMI. For the purposes of determining household income, the DCYF must treat the minor parent as his or her own household. The DCYF may not consider the availability of the other biological parent, nor may the DCYF require a copayment that is greater than the minimum program copayment established by the DCYF in rule. If necessary, the DCYF may designate children of minor parents as a "vulnerable population" in need of protective services pursuant to federal CCDF rules.

Amended Bill Compared to Second Substitute Bill:

The amended bill:

- removes the requirement for the DCYF to designate homeless children as a vulnerable population pursuant to federal CCDF rules;
- allows WCCC program eligibility for homeless families with household incomes at or below 85 percent of the state median income;
- requires the DCYF to allow homeless families a 12-month grace period in which to provide verification of employment or participation in approved program activities, or payment or payment plan arrangements for any outstanding copayment;
- limits families receiving a homeless grace period authorization to those who have not received such an authorization in the 12 months prior to the month of application or reapplication;
- requires, effective October 1, 2019, authorizations for the WCCC program for a minor parent meeting education requirements who has a household income at or below 85 percent of the SMI. The minor parent must be considered his or her own household for this purpose;
- prohibits the DCYF from considering the availability of the other biological parent when authorizing care for minor parents or from requiring a copayment from a minor parent greater than the minimum copayment established in rule; and
- allows the DCYF to designate children of minor parents as a vulnerable population pursuant to federal CCDF rules if necessary.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: This bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed, except for section 2, relating to WCCC eligibility for certain minor parents, which takes effect October 7, 2019.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) A four-month grace period is not enough time for families to stabilize when they are in crisis. Access to child care and early learning can mitigate the negative effects experienced by children in homelessness. The homeless grace period allows adults to put children in care while they work on mental health and housing stability. Extending the grace period to 12 months is a small change that can make a big difference for children in the state who need it the most. Child care is an important part of getting homeless families housed, which takes longer than the 120 days in the current grace period. Child care runs out before families have the opportunity to get into housing, causing further disruption. The fiscal note is five times what the DCYF's decision package was when they proposed this same policy in the fall. Not all families have relatives who can support them with child care while they are working and trying to get ahead. This bill will move the needle on supporting the most vulnerable in our communities.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Nguyen, prime sponsor; Katie Keiser, Child Care Resources; and Melanie Smith, Wellspring Family Services.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.