

SENATE BILL REPORT

2SHB 1303

As of April 9, 2019

Title: An act relating to improving access and completion for students at institutions of higher education, especially at community and technical colleges, by removing restrictions on subsidized child care.

Brief Description: Improving access and completion for students at institutions of higher education, especially at community and technical colleges, by removing restrictions on subsidized child care.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Shewmake, Eslick, Pollet, Griffey, Riccelli, Senn, Appleton, Dolan, Frame, Paul, Goodman, Robinson, Springer, Lekanoff, Macri, Thai, Tharinger, Stanford, Bergquist, Jinkins, Leavitt and Ormsby).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/06/19, 90-6.

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 3/15/19.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Department of Children, Youth, and Families to exempt certain students from work requirements as a condition of receiving Working Connections Child Care benefits.
- Specifies that these students must be full-time students of a community, technical, or tribal college and pursuing a certificate in nursing, early childhood education, a mental health profession, or paraeducation.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Ailey Kato (786-7434)

Background: Working Connections Child Care. This federally and state-funded program provides child care subsidies to families with an income at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level—\$51,500 for a family of four. The state pays part of the cost of childcare when a parent is employed, self-employed, or in approved activities unless the family has received child welfare, child protective, or family assessment response services in

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the previous six months. The family is responsible for making a copayment to the child care provider based on the family's countable income.

Currently, the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCFY) sets childcare subsidy policy for Working Connections Child Care (WCCC), and the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) administers the program. Effective July 1, 2019, all powers, duties, and functions of DSHS pertaining to the WCCC program are transferred to DCYF.

Authorizations for a WCCC subsidy are effective for 12 months. Historically, DCYF must manage the program, so the average monthly caseload does not exceed 33,000 households and must give access to the program based on priorities specified in the budget.

Working Connections Child Care Education Requirements. Eligibility for WCCC is provided in rule, and these requirements must be in accordance with federal law.

Applicants or consumers participating in WorkFirst may be eligible for WCCC benefits for vocational educational training and up to ten hours per week of study time for approved classes. Vocational education is training that leads to a degree or certificate in a specific occupation, not to result in a bachelor's or advanced degree, except in certain circumstances.

Applicants or consumers not participating in WorkFirst may be eligible for WCCC benefits for certain types of education programs. An applicant or consumer who is twenty-two or older may be eligible to receive general education and training benefits. The consumer must work either:

- an average of 20 or more hours per week of unsubsidized employment; or
- an average of 16 or more hours per week in a paid federal or state work study program.

An applicant or consumer who is twenty-two or older is limited to up to:

- 36 months of benefits during the consumer's lifetime for participation in vocational education offered by a public or private technical college or school, community college, or tribal college; and
- 10 hours per week of benefits for study time for approved classes.

Summary of Bill: Beginning August 1, 2020, DCYF may not require an applicant or consumer to meet work requirements as a condition of receiving WCCC benefits when the applicant or consumer is:

- a full-time student of a community, technical, or tribal college; and
- pursuing a certificate in nursing, early childhood education, a mental health profession, or paraeducation.

An applicant or consumer is a full-time student if the applicant or consumer meets the college's definition of a full-time student. The student must maintain passing grades and be in good standing pursuant to college attendance requirements.

These requirements are not intended to change how applicants or consumers are prioritized when applicants or consumers are placed on a wait list for WCCC benefits. They also do not require a community or technical college to expand any of its existing child care facilities.

Appropriation: The bill contains a null and void clause requiring specific funding be provided in an omnibus appropriation act.

Fiscal Note: Available. New fiscal note requested on March 6, 2019.

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: Students who are parents need help with removing barriers to graduation including increasing access to subsidized child care. Access to child care without work requirements can help full-time students complete their programs and graduate on time. It is difficult to juggle work, school, and being a good parent. This bill will help reduce intergenerational poverty and will help build a skilled workforce.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Sharon Shewmake, Prime Sponsor; Joel Ryan, Washington State Association of Head Start and Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program; Erin Frasier, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

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