

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5341

As of April 9, 2019

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

Sponsors: Senators Randall, Wilson, C., Liias, Frockt, Hasegawa, Hunt, Keiser, Kuderer, Nguyen, Palumbo and Saldaña.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/28/19.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Department of Children, Youth, and Families to offer Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) benefits to otherwise qualified students of community, technical, and tribal colleges who are pursuing all associate degree programs.
- Provides that full-time students do not need to work as a condition of receiving WCCC benefits.

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 work activities unless the family has received child welfare, child protective, or family assessment response services in the previous six months. The family is responsible for making a copayment to the child care provider based on the family's countable income.

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.

Currently, the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCFY) sets childcare subsidy policy for 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. 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.

WCCC 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. 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:

- 24 months of benefits during the consumer's lifetime for participation in adult basic education, English as a second language, or high school/GED completion;
- 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: The bill as referred to committee not considered.

Summary of Bill (Proposed Substitute): Beginning January 1, 2020, DCYF may not require an applicant or consumer who is a full-time student of a community, technical, or tribal college to meet work requirements as a condition of receiving WCCC benefits. An applicant or consumer is a full-time student if the applicant or consumer meets the college's definition of a full-time student.

DCYF must offer WCCC benefits to otherwise qualified students of community, technical, and tribal colleges who are pursuing all associate degree programs.

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: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 19, 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 on Proposed Substitute: PRO: A majority of future job openings will require some sort of postsecondary training. Increasing access to child care will help student parents, who may be receiving student aid, to complete their higher education programs and move into the workforce. Washington is one of the states that has the strictest work requirements and limits to the type of degree student parents may pursue. Many students parents drop out of higher education programs because of the work requirements. Child care access is also a concern for students in four-year colleges and universities.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Emily Randall, Prime Sponsor; Melissa Johnson, Washington State Association of Headstart and ECEAP; Ashley Mucino, citizen; John Hurley, Kitsap Community Resources; Emily Murphy, Children's Alliance; Austin Freeman, High School student, Legislative Youth Advisory Councilmember; Paul Francis, Council of Presidents; Alex Hur, Statewide Poverty Action Network, Seattle Education Access.

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