

SENATE BILL REPORT

2SSB 5820

As Passed Senate, March 11, 2019

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: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/15/19, 2/22/19 [DPS-WM, DNP, w/oRec].

Ways & Means: 2/28/19, 3/01/19 [DP2S, DNP, w/oRec].

Floor Activity:

Passed Senate: 3/11/19, 45-3.

Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill

- Directs the Department of Children, Youth, and Families to designate homeless children as a vulnerable population to allow eligibility and 12-month authorizations for Working Connections Child Care subsidies.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5820 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Wellman, Chair; Wilson, C., Vice Chair; Hunt, McCoy, Mullet, Pedersen and Salomon.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Padden and Wagoner.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Hawkins, Ranking Member; Holy.

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.

Staff: Ailey Kato (786-7434)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Second Substitute Senate Bill No. 5820 be substituted therefor, and the second substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Rolfes, Chair; Frockt, Vice Chair, Operating, Capital Lead; Mullet, Capital Budget Cabinet; Billig, Carlyle, Conway, Darneille, Hasegawa, Hunt, Keiser, Liias, Palumbo, Pedersen, Rivers and Van De Wege.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Honeyford, Assistant Ranking Member, Capital.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Braun, Ranking Member; Becker, Schoesler, Wagoner, Warnick and Wilson, L..

Staff: Maria Hovde (786-7474)

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 (FAR) 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.

Authorizations for a Working Connections Child Care (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 is partially funded by the federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF). 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 nonneedy relative.

DCYF rules provide that families experiencing homelessness are eligible for a four-month homeless grace period. These families have four months to provide verification of participation in approved activities and other information.

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. This federal law provides funding to states to support programs serving students experiencing homelessness. It defines "homeless children" as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

Summary of Second Substitute Bill: DCYF must designate homeless children as a vulnerable population pursuant to federal law to allow eligibility and 12-month authorizations for WCCC subsidies for homeless children.

Homeless means without a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence as defined by McKinney-Vento.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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 (Early Learning & K-12 Education): *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: This bill would provide stability and additional support to some of the most vulnerable families in the state. Homeless children and tribal children are among the least likely to be ready for kindergarten. Native children, regardless of income, have many risk factors. If these children attend ECEAP, a high quality early learning environment, they are more likely to be ready. Tribes that are currently offering ECEAP are considering closing these programs because their children are not eligible. This bill extends the four-month grade period for homeless families to twelve months. Housing programs can take longer than four months.

Persons Testifying (Early Learning & K-12 Education): PRO: Senator Joe Nguyen, Prime Sponsor; Melanie Smith, Wellspring Family Services; Katy Warren, Washington State Association of Headstart and ECEAP; Nigel Lawrence, The Suquamish Tribe; Sarah Brady, Child Care Resources.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Early Learning & K-12 Education): No one.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Second Substitute (Ways & Means): PRO: This bill is a small change that will make an enormous difference. The current policy of four months is not enough time to help homeless families stabilize. Access to high quality early learning can help build resilience in children and break the cycle of intergenerational poverty. Instead of spending their days in crisis, children can play and learn, surrounded by consistent adults and peers.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: Sarah Brady, Child Care Resources.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Ways & Means): No one.