

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6351

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Early Learning & K-12 Education, January 27, 2020

Title: An act relating to working connections child care eligibility.

Brief Description: Concerning working connections child care eligibility.

Sponsors: Senators Nguyen, Hasegawa, Kuderer, Lovelett, Wilson, C., Darneille, Frockt and Saldaña; by request of Office of the Governor.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/20/20, 1/27/20 [DP-WM, w/oRec].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Department of Children, Youth, and Families to extend a homeless grace period in the Working Connections Child Care program, which would provide families 12 months instead of 4 months to provide verification of participation in approved activities and other information.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

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

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Holy and Padden.

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—\$52,400 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 except in

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certain circumstances. 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. The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (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 operating budget.

Under DCYF rules, WCCC benefits for an eligible consumer begin when the consumer has completed the application and verification process within 30 days of the application and the consumer is working or participating in an approved activity.

Homeless Grace Period. A current WCCC rule provides eligibility to a homeless grace period for families experiencing homelessness if:

- homelessness is verified within 30 days of application;
- the family has not received a homeless grace period in the previous 12 months; and
- the family meets all eligibility requirements except that families have four months to provide: (1) verification of participation in approved work activities; (2) required third-party verification of employment; and (3) verification of payment or payment plan arrangements for an outstanding payment.

Families remain eligible for the homeless grace period through the end of the fourth month even if their homeless status changes.

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. This federal law provides funding to states to support programs serving students experiencing homelessness. Under the act, "homeless" means being without a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

Summary of Bill: DCYF must extend the homeless grace period from a 4-month grace period to a 12-month grace period. "Homeless" means without a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence as defined by McKinney-Vento.

Existing statutory language is moved into a new section.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 15, 2020.

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: It is difficult for many families to find child care, and it is much more difficult if a family is experiencing homelessness. Child care for a family experiencing homelessness can provide a safe, stable, and nurturing environment for a child and allows parents to focus on finding work and housing. In Washington, child care openings and affordable housing are scarce. This is a crisis. Four months is not enough time to find child care, housing, and employment.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Joe Nguyen, Prime Sponsor; Kelly Blucher, Goodwill Industries; Katie Kaiser, Child Care Resources; Bevette Irvis, Wellspring Family Services; Pam Crone, Building Changes; Melissa Johnson, Washington State Association of Head Start and ECEAP; Sarah Reyneveld, King County Women’s Advisory Board; Sydney Forrester, Governor's Policy Office.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: PRO: Emily Murphy, Early Learning Action Alliance; Sarah Brady , Child Care Resources.