

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5941

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Early Learning & K-12 Education, January 25, 2024

Title: An act relating to clarifying requirements for subsidized child care.

Brief Description: Clarifying requirements for subsidized child care.

Sponsors: Senators Wilson, C., Hasegawa, Keiser, Kuderer, Nguyen, Nobles and Wellman.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/18/24, 1/25/24 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Reorganizes existing statutory language, aligns language, and removes deadlines that are in the past and language that no longer applies related to the Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) program.
- References WCCC requirements established in rules adopted by the Department of Children, Youth, and Families.
- Changes a reference from "immigration" status of a WCCC applicant or consumer's child to "citizenship" status.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Wellman, Chair; Nobles, Vice Chair; Wilson, C., Vice Chair; Hawkins, Ranking Member; Dozier, Hunt, McCune, Mullet and Pedersen.

Staff: Ailey Kato (786-7434)

Background: The Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) program is a federally and state-funded program that provides child care subsidies to families, and is administered by

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the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF). WCCC eligibility requirements for parents or consumers and requirements for children receiving the child care can be found in statute and DCYF rules. Eligible families must make a copayment to the child care provider based on the family's countable income, which are established in state law.

Parents or consumers must:

- have parental control of one or more eligible children;
- live in the state;
- participate in an approved activity or meet special circumstances;
- have a countable income below a certain threshold;
- not have assets that exceed \$1 million; and
- have an agreed payment arrangement with any provider to whom an outstanding WCCC copayment is owed.

Children must:

- reside in the state; and
- be less than 13 years of age, or be less than 19 years of age and have a verified special need or be under court supervision.

In 2021 WCCC eligibility was expanded by phasing in higher income thresholds and lowering copayments. In 2023 WCCC eligibility was expanded to additional groups including that DCYF may not consider the immigration status of a child when determining eligibility for WCCC benefits.

Summary of Bill: Existing statutory language is reorganized into the following sections and placed under a new subchapter heading titled "subsidized child care":

- general policies;
- general eligibility requirements;
- copayments;
- exceptions to approved activity requirements;
- categorical eligibility; and
- expanded eligibility.

Deadlines that have passed and language that no longer applies are removed. Two statutes that are no longer in effect are repealed.

References to DCYF rules are added as it relates to other WCCC eligibility requirements.

The term "immigration status" is changed to "citizenship status" as it relates to eligibility for WCCC benefits.

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: PRO: This bill condenses and reorganizes existing statutory language. It does not change policy. It makes technical changes, and there is no fiscal impact.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Claire Wilson, Prime Sponsor.

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