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**SENATE BILL 5279**

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**State of Washington 69th Legislature 2025 Regular Session**

**By** Senators C. Wilson, Frame, Hasegawa, Krishnadasan, Nobles, Saldaña, Shewmake, and Trudeau

AN ACT Relating to qualifications for child care providers; adding a new section to chapter 43.216 RCW; creating a new section; and providing an expiration date.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 43.216 RCW to read as follows:

(1) Except as provided in subsection (3) of this section, the department shall allow licensed child care providers until at least August 1, 2028, to demonstrate experience-based competency as an alternative means to comply with child care licensing rules that require a provider to hold an early childhood education initial, short, or state certificate, when the provider has all of the following documented in the department's electronic workforce registry:

(a) Active employment in a position that requires an early childhood education initial, short, or state certificate;

(b) Employment in a licensed or certified child care center or licensed family home provider without a break in service since August 1, 2021, or a cumulative seven years of employment in a licensed or certified child care center or licensed family home provider; and

(c) Completion of and maintained compliance with all health and safety and child care or school-age care basics training required by the department.

(2) The department shall establish a process to proactively recognize the fulfillment of staff qualification requirements for any provider who has, as of the effective date of this section, demonstrated all of the criteria required for experience-based competency as identified in subsection (1) of this section. The process established by the department may not require providers meeting these criteria to submit an application demonstrating fulfillment of their staff qualification requirements, and the department must provide notice to providers whose staff qualification requirements have been fulfilled through this process.

(3) Nothing in this section prohibits the department from establishing more restrictive requirements for providers serving the early childhood education and assistance program including, but not limited to, excluding experience-based competency as an alternative means to fulfill staff qualification requirements, nor does it prohibit the department from excluding experience-based competency from the calculation of early achievers professional development points.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The department of children, youth, and families shall convene a stakeholder group to assist the department in identifying strategies to improve early learning and school-age staff qualification requirements and verification processes including, but not limited to, identifying measures to streamline and clarify relevant administrative rules and department policies and defining criteria and methods by which to honor equivalent out-of-state education and training.

(2) At a minimum, the stakeholder group must include:

(a) Family home and child care center providers, including at least one provider from a child care center that is part of a national chain or has 10 or more sites; and

(b) Representation from the following organizations:

(i) The statewide child care resource and referral network;

(ii) A community-based training organization that provides training to licensed family day care providers;

(iii) A statewide organization that represents the interests of family day care providers;

(iv) A statewide organization that represents the interests of licensed child day care centers;

(v) The statewide out-of-school time intermediary organization;

(vi) An organization that represents the interests of refugee and immigrant communities;

(vii) A bilingual child care provider whose first language is not English;

(viii) An organization that advocates for early learning;

(ix) An organization representing private and independent schools; and

(x) The state board for community and technical colleges.

(3) The department shall report to the legislature by December 1, 2026, in compliance with RCW 43.01.036, on strategies identified by the stakeholder group and the department's plans and timelines under which to carry out those strategies.

(4) This section expires July 1, 2028.

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