

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5752

As of February 24, 2025

Title: An act relating to modifying child care and early childhood development programs.

Brief Description: Modifying child care and early childhood development programs.

Sponsors: Senators Wilson, C., Robinson and Dhingra.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Ways & Means: 2/25/25.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Delays the entitlement date for the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), a voluntary preschool program, from the 2026-27 school year to the 2030-31 school year.
- Repeals the Birth-to-Three ECEAP Program.
- Delays the Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) Program eligibility expansion from 60 to 75 percent of State Median Income (SMI) from July 1, 2025, to July 1, 2029, and delays the eligibility expansion from 75 to 85 percent of SMI from July 1, 2027, to July 1, 2031.
- Modifies the WCCC copayment schedule by adjusting the income thresholds and calculating copayments based upon a percentage of SMI and the number of children receiving WCCC services in the household.
- Repeals the expanded WCCC eligibility for child care employees and for applicant or consumers enrolled in a state registered apprenticeship program, and removes the waiver of work requirements for state registered apprenticeships.
- Makes certain provider supports subject to appropriations.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Josh Hinman (786-7281)

Background: Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program. The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) is a preschool and family support program administered by the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF). Children are eligible for ECEAP when they are between the ages of three and five, and are from families with incomes at or below 36 percent of State Median Income (SMI). Families may also be eligible under certain other criteria, including children eligible for special education due to a disability, and certain other risk factors.

ECEAP becomes an entitlement beginning in the 2026-27 school year. Entitlement is voluntary enrollment.

Birth-to-Three Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program. In 2019, DCYF was directed to develop a plan for phased implementation of a Birth-to-Three ECEAP Pilot Project for eligible children under 36 months old within resources available under the federal Preschool Development Grant. To be eligible, a child's family income must be at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty level. The Birth-to-Three ECEAP Pilot Project must be delivered through licensed child care providers.

Beginning July 1, 2026, Birth-to-Three ECEAP expands eligibility to families with a household income at or below 50 percent of SMI, subject to appropriations.

Subsidized Child Care. The Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) Program is a federally and state-funded program that provides subsidies for child care to families with incomes at or below 60 percent of the SMI, or meet certain categorical eligibility criteria. The state pays the cost of child care, minus the family's copayment amount, when a parent is working or participating in approved work-related activities.

Working Connections Child Care Income Expansion. Beginning July 1, 2025, a family is eligible for the WCCC Program benefits when the household's annual income is above 60 percent and at or below 75 percent of the SMI. Beginning July 1, 2027, subject to appropriations, a family is eligible if the household's annual income is up to 85 percent of the SMI.

Child Care Employees. A family is eligible for the WCCC Program when the household's annual income is at or below 85 percent of the SMI and:

- the child is younger than 13, or younger than 19 with a special need;
- the applicant or consumer is employed in a licensed child care center or family home provider; and
- the household meets all other WCCC Program eligibility requirements.

DCYF must waive the copayment to the extent allowable under federal law.

State Registered Apprenticeships. A person is eligible to receive WCCC Program benefits for the first 12 months of the person's enrollment in a state registered apprenticeship when:

- the person has a household income that does not exceed 75 percent of SMI at the time of application;
- the child receiving care is younger than 13 years old, or is younger than 19 years old and has a verified special need or is under court supervision; and
- the household meets all other WCCC Program eligibility requirements.

Subject to appropriations, DCYF may not require an applicant or consumer to meet work requirements as a condition of receiving the WCCC Program benefits when the recipient is registered in a state registered apprenticeship program.

Copayments. Depending on income, eligible families may be required to pay a copayment to their provider. The copayment amount is established in statute:

- \$0 for households at or below 20 percent of SMI;
- \$65 for households at or below 36 percent of SMI;
- \$90 for households at or below 50 percent of SMI;
- \$165 for households at or below 60 percent of SMI; and
- \$215 for households above 60 percent of SMI.

Provider Supports. *Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation.* DCYF must have or contract for one coordinator and must enter into a contract with an organization providing Early Achievers coaching services to hire at least 12 consultants. DCYF must determine, in collaboration with the statewide child care resource and referral network, where the additional consultants should be sited based on factors such as the total provider numbers overlaid with indicators of highest need.

Trauma-Informed Care Supports. DCYF must provide supports to aid eligible providers in providing trauma-informed care. Supports may be used by eligible providers for certain purposes including additional compensation for individuals with specialty credentials, professional development and training, screening tools and assessment materials, supportive services, and other related expenses.

Dual Language Rate Enhancements. DCYF must establish a dual language designation and provide subsidy rate enhancements or site-specific grants for licensed or certified child care providers, and ECEAP or Birth-to-Three ECEAP contractors.

Summary of Bill: Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program. The ECEAP entitlement is delayed from the 2026-27 school year to the 2030-31 school year.

The Birth-to-Three ECEAP Program is repealed and references to the Birth-to-Three ECEAP Program are removed.

Subsidized Child Care. Working Connections Child Care Eligibility Expansion. The WCCC income eligibility expansion from 60 to 75 percent of SMI is delayed from July 1, 2025, to July 1, 2029.

The WCCC income eligibility expansion from 75 to 85 percent of SMI, which is subject to appropriations, is delayed from July 1, 2027, to July 1, 2031.

Child Care Employees. The eligibility expansion for child care employees is repealed.

State Registered Apprenticeships. The eligibility expansion for state registered apprenticeships is repealed. The waiver of work requirements for state registered apprenticeships is also repealed.

Copayments. Copayment amounts are modified to the following schedule:

If the household's income is:	Then the household's base monthly copayment is:	Each additional child in that household is:
Below 25 percent of the SMI	\$0	\$0
At or above 25 percent and below 35 percent of the SMI	25 percent of the SMI for a household of two, multiplied by 5 percent	Plus 20 percent of the base monthly copayment for each additional child
At or above 35 percent and below 45 percent of the SMI	35 percent of the SMI for a household of two, multiplied by 5.5 percent	Plus 20 percent of the base monthly copayment for each additional child
At or above 45 percent and below 55 percent of the SMI	45 percent of the SMI for a household of two, multiplied by 6 percent	Plus 20 percent of the base monthly copayment for each additional child
At or above 55 percent of the SMI	55 percent of the SMI for a household of two, multiplied by 6.5 percent	Plus 20 percent of the base monthly copayment for each additional child

Provider Supports. The following provider supports are modified to, subject to appropriations:

- Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation;
- Trauma-Informed Care Supports; and
- Dual Language Rate Enhancements.

Appropriation: The bill contains a section or sections to limit implementation to the availability of amounts appropriated for that specific purpose.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 14, 2025.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: The bill contains several effective dates. Please refer to the bill.