

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5865

As of February 11, 2009

Title: An act relating to a report on early learning services for low- income families.

Brief Description: Requiring a report on early learning services for low-income families.

Sponsors: Senators Kauffman, Roach, McAuliffe, Hobbs, Kline and Shin.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/11/09.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Kimberly Cushing (786-7421)

Background: Created in 1965 Head Start is a federal program that provides comprehensive education, health, nutrition, and parent involvement services to low-income children and their families. Eighty percent of Head Start funding is federal and 20 percent is a required local match. In fiscal year (FY) 2009, there are 9,702 Head Start slots in Washington at an average cost of \$8,758 per child. The federal government administers the Head Start program, and directly contracts with providers.

In 1985 Washington created the state-funded Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), a comprehensive whole child, family-focused, preschool program designed to help low-income and at-risk children and their families succeed in school and life. The program was modeled after Head Start. In FY 2009 there are 8,226 ECEAP slots funded at \$6,674 per child. The Department of Early Learning (DEL) administers the ECEAP, and directly contracts with service providers.

In 2003 the Legislature directed the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) to review research assessing the effectiveness of prevention and early intervention programs concerning children and youth. WSIPP completed the study in September 2004, but is currently in the process of updating the literature on early learning findings.

In 2008 the Legislature directed DEL to develop a proposal for implementing a statewide Washington Head Start Program. The Legislature appropriate \$250,000 to DEL to conduct the study. In the fall of 2008 DEL suspended the study due to budget constraints.

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.

Summary of Bill: The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) must review and compare ECEAP and Head Start. At a minimum, JLARC must provide comparative data on specified components, such as eligibility criteria, funding levels that reflect the amount spent per child per hour of service, delivery methods, service hour configurations, facilities, transportation requirements, performance standards, professional development and training, technical assistance, educational outcomes, kindergarten readiness, and processes for ensuring continuous improvement in program quality.

Beginning with the work already completed by the WSIPP, JLARC must also evaluate the latest research and information on early childhood development and recommend any new innovations that may improve the quality of state-supported early learning programs.

JLAR must seek training or technical assistance from the appropriate regional office of the federal Head Start in order to maximize nonstate resources. JLARC must solicit input from state ECEAP program providers, tribal governments operating Head Start programs, providers operating migrant and seasonal Head Start programs, and the Early Learning Advisory Council.

JLARC must deliver a final report to the Legislature by July 1, 2010.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 4, 2009.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: We need to understand the differences between Head Start and ECEAP before we consider any sort of statewide plan that meshes the two; are we comparing apples to oranges? This furthers the conversation for the two programs to be more closely aligned. The Washington State Association of Head Start and ECEAP has decided to continue the work DEL had begun and is looking into a state Head Start program. This bill could be further expanded to incorporate the work already being done.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Kauffman, prime sponsor; Katy Warren, Washington State Association of Head Start and ECEAP.