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HOUSE BILL 2107

State of Washington 61st Legislature 2009 Regular Session

By Representatives Kagi, Roberts, Kessler, Kenney, and Santos

Read first time 02/10/09. Referred to Committee on Early Learning & Children's Services.

AN ACT Relating to delivery of early learning home visitation programs; adding new sections to chapter 43.215 RCW; creating a new section; and repealing RCW 43.121.170, 43.121.175, and 43.121.180.

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

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NEW SECTION. Sec. 1. The legislature finds that parents are a child's first and most important teachers. Infants and toddlers, in particular, are significantly impacted by their earliest experiences at home with parents. The legislature also finds there is ample research demonstrating that evidence-based home visitation programs are highly effective early interventions for children born to families with risk factors linked to poor child outcomes. Well-coordinated delivery of high-quality home visitation programs can produce multiple benefits for children, families, and communities. The legislature finds further that multidisciplinary research on early child development documents the high returns that investments in early childhood programs can pay in terms of subsequent educational attainment and in lower rates of social problems, such as teenage pregnancy, welfare dependency, and criminal activity. The legislature finds that sustaining the investments in evidence-based early learning home visitation programs

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- 1 can produce measurable and long-term economic benefits to the state by
- 2 overcoming the cognitive, emotional, and resource limitations that
- 3 often characterize the environments of disadvantaged children during
- 4 their first several years of life.

- 5 <u>NEW SECTION.</u> **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 43.215 RCW to read as follows:
 - The legislature finds that compelling scientific research continues to reveal that:
 - (1) The years from birth to three are most critical in building the social, emotional, and cognitive developmental foundations of a young child. Research into the brain development of very young children proves that children are born learning. The quality of baby's earliest social interactions with parents is paramount in the child's continuing development across all domains.
 - (2) Research also demonstrates that infants and young children exposed to chronic environmental stress in families with few protective factors develop significantly fewer of the neural brain connections essential for the child's later learning. The farther behind children are in their social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development, the more unlikely it is they will be able to catch up when they enter preschool or kindergarten.
 - (3) A significant number of Washington's children ages birth to five years are in homes where two or more of the following risk factors are present, creating a greater likelihood of the child's failure in school and beyond: Poverty; single parent, teen parent, or no parent; no parent employed full time or year-round; both parents with a disability; and mother without a high school diploma.
 - (4) Longitudinal research and rigorous studies demonstrate that children and parents receiving high-quality, evidence-based home visitation services exhibit better birth outcomes; enhanced parent-child interactions; more efficient use of appropriate health care services; enhanced child development including improved school readiness, and early detection of developmental delays; reduced dependence on public assistance; higher rates of high school graduation, completion of postsecondary training, and job retention; and reduced frequency and severity of child maltreatment.

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The legislature intends to promote the delivery of voluntary evidence-based and research-based home visitation services to families as an early intervention strategy to alleviate the adverse effects on infant and child development resulting from family stresses due to poverty, single parenthood, parental unemployment or underemployment, parental disability, or parental lack of a high school diploma.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 3. A new section is added to chapter 43.215 RCW to read as follows:

- (1) Within available funds, the department, jointly with the early learning private-public partnership, shall fund evidence-based and research-based home visitation programs for high-risk families to improve parenting skills and awareness about children's early development and its impact on long-term outcomes for children. Early learning home visitation programs must be voluntary; designed to address the needs of families and assist parents in the very earliest stages of their child's development; and structured to alleviate the effect on child development of risk factors such as poverty, single or teen parenthood, parental unemployment or underemployment, parental disability, or parental lack of a high school diploma.
- (2) The department, jointly with the private-public partnership, shall report biennially to the governor and the appropriate committees of the legislature beginning December 1, 2010, regarding the outcomes for high-risk families with young children.
- (3) The definitions in this subsection apply throughout this section and section 2 of this act unless the context clearly requires otherwise.
- (a) "Evidence-based" means a program or practice that has had multiple site randomized controlled trials across heterogeneous populations demonstrating that the program or practice is effective for the population.
- (b) "Home visitation" means providing services in the permanent or temporary residence, or in other familiar surroundings, of the family receiving such services.
- (c) "Research-based" means a program or practice that has some research demonstrating effectiveness, but that does not yet meet the standard of evidence-based practice.

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- NEW SECTION. Sec. 4. The following acts or parts of acts are each repealed:
- 3 (1) RCW 43.121.170 (Home visitation programs--Findings--Intent) and 4 2007 c 466 s 1;
- 5 (2) RCW 43.121.175 (Home visitation programs--Definitions) and 2007 6 c 466 s 2; and

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(3) RCW 43.121.180 (Home visitation programs--Funding--Home visitation services coordination or consolidation plan--Report) and 2008 c 152 s 6 & 2007 c 466 s 3.

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