
Early Learning & Human Services Committee

HB 2569

Brief Description: Implementing a voluntary quality rating and improvement system for child care centers and early learning programs.

Sponsors: Representatives Orwall, Goodman, Kagi, Maxwell, Reykdal, Dickerson, Tharinger, Pollet and Roberts.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Modifies the stated purposes of the voluntary quality rating and improvement system (QRIS).
- Articulates the Department of Early Learning's duties with regard to the QRIS.

Hearing Date: 1/26/12

Staff: Megan Palchak (786-7120).

Background:

Voluntary Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS).

In 2007 the Legislature required the Department of Early Learning (DEL) to implement a voluntary quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) for licensed or certified child care centers and homes and early education programs in collaboration with community and statewide partners, subject to the availability of funds.

Currently, the stated purpose of the QRIS is to:

- provide parents with information about the quality of child care and early education programs;
- support improvements in early learning programs throughout the state;
- increase the readiness of children for school; and
- close the disparity in access to quality care.

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.

Prior to the final implementation of the QRIS, the DEL must report to the appropriate policy and fiscal committees of the Legislature.

Statewide Child Care Resource and Referral Network.

The DEL must work with the statewide child care resource and referral network (network) and others to create local child care resource and referral organizations (organizations). These organizations are authorized to carry out needs assessments, resource development, provider training, technical assistance, and parent information and training. The DEL must actively seek funds to distribute as grants to the network or potential organizations. Staff and technical assistance to the network and local organizations must be provided by the DEL. Data about local child care needs and availability for future planning and development must be provided through the network or local organizations. The DEL must provide training and technical assistance to child care providers in coordination with the network and local organizations.

Definition of Early Learning.

"Early learning" includes, but is not limited to, programs and services for child care; state, federal, private, and nonprofit preschool; child care subsidies; child care resource and referral; parent education and support; and training and professional development for early learning professionals.

Summary of Bill:

Under this act, the DEL must implement the voluntary QRIS for licensed and certified child care centers and homes and other early learning programs as determined by the DEL.

The stated purposes of the QRIS are modified to:

- give families information about the quality of early learning and school-age programs;
- add that improvements in early learning programs throughout the state will be supported above the minimum safety and health standards required for licensure;
- promote access to quality early learning programs for all children; and
- add the promotion and support of professional development and training for early and school-age care professionals.

To the extent that funds are available, upon full implementation of the QRIS, the DEL must:

- assign ratings to participating early learning programs based on research-based voluntary QRIS standards, including: child outcomes, facility curriculum and learning environment, professional development and training, and family engagement and partnership;
- partner with community-based organizations, higher education, and other stakeholders to provide:
 - supports and incentives to QRIS participants, including highly trained coaches, professional development, and training and facility improvement grants in partnership with the state child care resource and referral agency;
 - incentives for early learning professionals for the attainment of training and education; and
 - increased child care assistance reimbursement rates and payments that reflect the cost of quality programs for participants including compensation for staff in

participating programs, and promote affordability of high-quality early programs for all families;

- evaluate the effectiveness of the QRIS every three years, and make the evaluation report publicly available;
- issue recommendations to the Legislature regarding additional incentives to support compensation increases based on facility rating. The recommendations must recognize the role of appropriate compensation in supporting education and retention and promoting the affordability of high-quality early learning programs for all families;
- develop a plan, in consultation with constituents, for full inclusion of licensed and certified school-age programs serving children ages 5 through 12 years in the QRIS;
- report program ratings on a public website; and
- partner with the child care resource and referral agency or other entities to expand parent awareness about the QRIS and its potential to improve child care quality and help parents make child care decisions that meet family needs and support school readiness of children.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 17, 2012.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.