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**SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5107**

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**State of Washington 65th Legislature 2017 Regular Session**

**By** Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators Billig, Fain, Rolfes, Wellman, Walsh, Zeiger, Liias, Cleveland, Hunt, Conway, Saldaña, Kuderer, and Mullet)

AN ACT Relating to creating a local pathway for local governments, school districts, institutions of higher education, and nonprofit organizations to provide more high quality early learning opportunities by reducing barriers and increasing efficiency; amending RCW 43.215.099, 43.215.410, and 43.215.195; adding a new section to chapter 43.215 RCW; and creating a new section.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The legislature recognizes that local governments, school districts, institutions of higher education as defined in RCW 28B.10.016, and nonprofit organizations play an important role in strengthening the early care and education systems in the state. The legislature acknowledges that these entities may face barriers to investing in early care and education programs. The legislature intends to create a local pathway to high quality early learning to help these entities understand how they can use additional local and private funds with existing funds to expand access, increase quality, and extend hours for existing programs. The legislature intends for this local pathway to reduce barriers and increase efficiency to provide more high quality early learning opportunities.

**Sec.**  RCW 43.215.099 and 2015 3rd sp.s. c 7 s 15 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The foundation of quality in the early care and education system in Washington is the quality rating and improvement system entitled the early achievers program. In an effort to build on the existing quality framework, enhance access to quality care for children, and strengthen the entire early care and education systems in the state, it is important to integrate the efforts of state and local governments, school districts, institutions of higher education as defined in RCW 28B.10.016, and nonprofit organizations.

(2) Local governments, school districts, institutions of higher education as defined in RCW 28B.10.016, and nonprofit organizations are encouraged to collaborate with the department when establishing and strengthening early learning programs for residents.

(3) Local governments, school districts, institutions of higher education as defined in RCW 28B.10.016, and nonprofit organizations may contribute funds to the department for the following purposes:

(a) Initial investments to build capacity and quality in local early care and education programming; ((~~and~~))

(b) Reductions in copayments charged to parents or caregivers;

(c) To expand access and increase slots in early care and education programs;

(d) To increase quality for early care and education programs; and

(e) To extend hours in early care and education programs.

(4) Funds contributed to the department by local governments, school districts, institutions of higher education as defined in RCW 28B.10.016, and nonprofit organizations must be deposited in the early start account established in RCW 43.215.195.

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

(1) The department shall create a local pathway to high quality early learning to help local governments, school districts, institutions of higher education as defined in RCW 28B.10.016, nonprofit organizations, and early learning providers use additional local or private funds, or both, to expand access, increase quality, and extend hours for the early childhood education and assistance program.

(2) The local pathway must reduce barriers and increase efficiency for using local or private funds, or both, to provide more high quality early learning opportunities.

(3) The local pathway must include, but is not limited to, the following to help local governments, school districts, institutions of higher education as defined in RCW 28B.10.016, and nonprofit organizations:

(a) A needs assessment to determine where investments in early learning are needed and feasible;

(b) A funding tool to estimate the local or private cost of expanding access, increasing quality, and extending hours for the early childhood education and assistance program; and

(c) Technical assistance for using local or private funds, or both, with existing funds in the early childhood education and assistance program.

(4) The local pathway must include, but is not limited to, the following to help early learning providers:

(a) Information on how to best work with local governments, school districts, institutions of higher education as defined in RCW 28B.10.016, and nonprofit organizations to expand access, increase quality, and extend hours for the early childhood education and assistance program;

(b) Training and technical assistance for using local or private funds, or both, with existing funds in the early childhood education and assistance program; and

(c) Training and technical assistance for creating mixed-income programs, including children using private pay.

(5) For the 2017-18 school year, the local pathway must be available to a maximum of five entities, which can include local governments, school districts, institutions of higher education as defined in RCW 28B.10.016, and nonprofit organizations, that want to expand access, increase quality, and extend hours for existing early childhood education and assistance program contractors in good standing. In future years, the number of local governments, school districts, institutions of higher education as defined in RCW 28B.10.016, nonprofit organizations, and early childhood education and assistance program contractors that use the local pathway is not limited.

(6)(a) By December 1, 2018, and in compliance with RCW 43.01.036, the department must submit a report to the appropriate committees of the legislature describing the effectiveness of the local pathway. The report must describe what is needed to expand the local pathway to help local governments, school districts, institutions of higher education as defined in RCW 28B.10.016, nonprofit organizations, and early learning providers throughout the state. The report must include a plan for incorporating working connections child care and home visiting into the local pathway.

(b) By December 1, 2017, and in compliance with RCW 43.01.036, the department must submit a preliminary report to the appropriate committees of the legislature that describes the department's progress on the topics described in (a) of this subsection.

**Sec.**  RCW 43.215.410 and 2006 c 265 s 211 are each amended to read as follows:

The department shall administer a state-supported early childhood education and assistance program to assist eligible children with educational, social, health, nutritional, and cultural development to enhance their opportunity for success in the common school system. Eligible children shall be admitted to approved early childhood programs to the extent that the legislature provides funds, and additional ((~~eligible~~)) children may be admitted to the extent that grants and contributions from community sources provide sufficient funds for a program equivalent to that supported by state funds. Grants and contributions from community sources shall not supplant the funding required for the full statewide implementation of the early learning program in RCW 43.215.456.

**Sec.**  RCW 43.215.195 and 2015 3rd sp.s. c 7 s 17 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The early start account is created in the custody of the state ((~~treasury~~)) treasurer. Revenues in the account shall consist of appropriations by the legislature and all other sources deposited into the account. ((~~Moneys in the account may only be used after appropriation.~~)) Expenditures from the account may be used only ((~~to improve the quality of early care and education programming~~)) for the purposes listed in RCW 43.215.099. All receipts from local governments, school districts, institutions of higher education as defined in RCW 28B.10.016, and nonprofit organizations must be deposited into the account.

(2) The department oversees the account. Only the director or the director's designee may authorize expenditures from the account. The account is subject to allotment procedures under chapter 43.88 RCW, but an appropriation is not required for expenditures.

(3) The department shall separately track funds received for each local government, school district, institution of higher education as defined in RCW 28B.10.016, or nonprofit organization that deposits funds into the account. Expenditures from these funds may be used only for the purposes listed in RCW 43.215.099 as identified in writing with the department by the contributing local government, school district, institution of higher education as defined in RCW 28B.10.016, or nonprofit organization.

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