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**HOUSE BILL 2284**

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**State of Washington 66th Legislature 2020 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives McCaslin, Dent, Pollet, and Tharinger

AN ACT Relating to supporting the cost-effective professional development of early learning providers; amending RCW 43.216.110 and 43.216.255; adding a new section to chapter 43.216 RCW; and creating a new section.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The legislature finds that the department of children, youth, and families has adopted new staff qualifications for early learning providers that require higher education. The legislature further finds that many early learning providers have been engaged in the child care profession for years and provide safe, nurturing, and quality care without such formal education. The department of children, youth, and families has been a leader in effectively furthering public awareness of the importance of early learning and the support that early learning providers require. Further, the legislature recognizes that the time and costs associated with earning college credits can be burdensome to providers, particularly those providers in rural communities. Therefore, the legislature intends to support the economic viability of these small businesses by lowering the cost of professional development for child care providers. Further, the legislature intends to allow providers to identify their own opportunities for cost-effective ways to self-certify their completion of certain professional development activities that satisfy education requirements for child care licensure.

**Sec.**  RCW 43.216.110 and 2012 c 149 s 2 are each amended to read as follows:

((~~By December 31, 2012,~~)) The department shall adopt core competencies for early care and education professionals and ((~~child and youth development professionals and develop an implementation plan. The department shall~~)) incorporate the core competencies into ((~~all appropriate professional development opportunities including, but not limited to,~~)) the quality rating and improvement system((~~, the early childhood education and assistance program, child care licensing, and the early support for infants and toddlers program~~)). The purpose of the core competencies is to serve as a foundation for what early care and education professionals ((~~and child and youth development professionals~~)) who are participants in the quality rating and improvement system need to know and do to provide quality care for children. The core competencies must be reviewed and updated every five years. The department may not apply the core competencies to minimum licensing standards.

**Sec.**  RCW 43.216.255 and 2015 3rd sp.s. c 7 s 3 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) ((~~No later than November 1, 2016,~~)) The department shall implement a single set of licensing standards for child care and the early childhood education and assistance program. The department shall produce the single set of licensing standards within the department's available appropriations. The ((~~new~~)) licensing standards must:

(a) Provide minimum health and safety standards that are primarily based on structural and environmental factors for child care and preschool programs;

(b) ((~~Rely on the standards established in the early achievers program to address quality issues in participating early childhood programs;~~

~~(c)~~)) Take into account the separate needs of family care providers and child care centers; and

((~~(d)~~)) (c) Promote the continued safety of child care settings.

(2) Private schools that operate early learning programs and do not receive state subsidy payments shall be subject only to the minimum health and safety standards in subsection (1)(a) of this section and the requirements necessary to assure a sufficient early childhood education to meet usual requirements needed for transition into elementary school. The state, and any agency thereof, shall not restrict or dictate any specific educational or other programs for early learning programs operated by private schools except for programs that receive state subsidy payments.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 43.216 RCW to read as follows:

The department shall require regional licensing staff to award clock hours to early learning providers pursuant to this section. The department shall allow early learning providers to use clock hours to satisfy education requirements for professional licensure. The department's regional licensing staff must award clock hours when a provider self-certifies that the experience provides beneficial skills and knowledge in an area directly related to providing care that supports the safety and developmental needs of children. At a minimum, activities that qualify for clock hours must include:

(1) Participation in community-based trainings;

(2) Earned credit from an accredited institution of higher education;

(3) Time related to providing care for children in a licensed child care center or licensed family home. These activities may include volunteering, apprenticeship, and peer mentoring; and

(4) Certification by a national organization with a mission related to providing early learning or child care.

**--- END ---**