

HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS

HB 1935

Brief Description: Adjusting eligibility for early childhood assistance programs.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Modifies the threshold family income eligibility requirement for the Early Childhood Education Assistance Program to be 130 percent of the federally defined poverty level.

Background:

The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) is a voluntary preschool program designed to assist eligible children with educational, social, health, nutritional, and cultural development to enhance their opportunity for success in the common school system. The target ECEAP population is four-year old children whose family incomes are at or below 100 percent of the federal poverty level.

The Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development (DCTED) administers the ECEAP program through grants to local contractors, including school districts, educational service districts, local governments, nonprofit organizations, child care providers, community colleges, and tribal programs. There are 292 program sites statewide.

Eligible children may be admitted to approved ECEAP programs only to the extent that the Legislature provides funds. For the current biennium, the Legislature appropriated approximately \$60 million from the general fund for ECEAP purposes, supporting 7,032 openings for eligible children.

In the last year, DCTED contractors turned away 1,396 ECEAP applicants for income-related reasons. Currently, 8 percent of available slots in ECEAP programs are unfilled.

Summary:

The bill changes the family income eligibility requirement for the target ECEAP population to 130 percent of the federal poverty level.

The size of the ECEAP program in terms of funding continues to be controlled by legislative appropriation.

Appropriation: *None.*

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

Fiscal Note: Requested March 2, 1999.