

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5805

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education, February 28, 2005

Title: An act relating to regulating preschools and kindergartens.

Brief Description: Regulating preschools and kindergartens.

Sponsors: Senators Kohl-Welles, Hargrove, Brown, McAuliffe, Rasmussen and Jacobsen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education: 2/7/05, 2/28/05 [DPS-WM, DNP, w/oRec].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING, K-12 & HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5805 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Pridemore, Vice Chair; Weinstein, Vice Chair; Schmidt, Ranking Minority Member; Berkey, Eide, Kohl-Welles, Rasmussen, Rockefeller and Shin.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Benton, Carrell, Mulliken, Pflug, and Schoesler.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senator Delvin.

Staff: Ingrid Mungia (786-7423)

Background: Under current Washington law the Department of Social and Health Services does not regulate or license kindergarten and preschool. Currently, a national program accredits kindergartens across the states. The National Association for the Education of Young Children has accredited 134 early learning programs in Washington State.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The Department of Social and Health Services definition of agency, for regulating and licensing purposes, is amended to include preschools. The definition of preschools includes prekindergarten and kindergarten programs not eligible for approval and regulation by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. The Secretary of Social and Health Services must develop an implementation plan for the licensing and regulation of preschools. The licensing and regulation must be implemented in three stages over the next five years.

Substituted Bill Compared to Substituted Bill: Requires the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) to consider and make recommendations on the following:

- define preschool and kindergarten;
- develop an implementation plan to license and regulate preschools and kindergartens;

- identify the agency best suited to license and regulate preschools and kindergartens;
- define the criteria to license preschools and kindergartens; and
- identify whether to develop standards for health/safety and/or content of curriculum and teacher education.

JLARC must consult with the following:

- early learning teachers,
- representatives of parents organizations,
- representatives from the office of superintendent of public instruction,
- representatives from the department of health, and
- representatives from the early childhood education and assistance program and head start.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The original bill was not considered.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For: The standards are good, but health, safety, and classroom environment also need to be included. Like the definition of preschools in the bill. There is concern that programs currently serving preschool and kindergartens would be regulated by two different standards. We need to be cautious when crafting definitions for preschools and kindergartens. All the stakeholders should sit down together to craft a definition. We need to be careful when applying regulations to preschools and kindergartens.

Testimony Against: None.

Who Testified: PRO: Agda Burchard, The Collaborative; Patricia Christenson, The Montessori Country School; Robin Dunn, WSA Headstart ECEAP.