
Early Learning & Human Services Committee

SB 5625

Brief Description: Authorizing implementation of a nonexpiring license for early learning providers.

Sponsors: Senators Harper, King, McAuliffe, Litzow and Nelson.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows fully licensed providers to sustain a license by meeting ongoing licensing requirements.
- Removes the requirement for providers to renew by formally reapplying every three years.

Hearing Date: 3/8/11

Staff: Megan Palchak (786-7120).

Background:

The Department of Early Learning (DEL) is charged with licensing early learning providers in Washington. (Child care is included in the definition of early learning.) According to the DEL, the DEL licenses more than 7,500 child care providers, who care for approximately 180,000 children. The DEL also monitors licensed providers to ensure minimum licensing requirements are met.

In 2010 Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 6444 directed the DEL to develop a plan to improve child care licensing practices by January 15, 2011. On January 14, 2011, the DEL released its report to the Legislature. The report outlines a 10-year plan to improve licensing. The first item addressed in the plan is implementation of nonexpiring licenses.

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.

Currently, child care providers are issued an initial license for a six-month period until the licensee can demonstrate that they meet specific requirements. Four initial licenses can be issued within a two-year period. Currently, all licensed child care providers are required to reapply for licensure every three years. According to the DEL, "relicensing is a time-consuming process that involves much paperwork for both the licensor and provider, and culminates in a relicensing visit that can last several hours."

According to a 2008 survey administered by the National Association for Regulatory Administration and National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center, 12 states utilize the nonexpiring license model. These states include Arkansas, California, Colorado, Georgia, Kansas, Maryland, North Carolina, Nebraska, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, and Wisconsin.

Summary of Bill:

Fully licensed child care providers are no longer required to reapply for licensure through the Department of Early Learning (DEL) every three years. The license renewal process does not apply to nonexpiring licenses. Instead full licenses will remain valid so long as licensees submit the following items on an annual basis:

- annual licensing fee;
- declaration to the DEL indicating the intent to either continue or cease operating a licensed child care program;
- declaration of compliance with all licensing rules; and
- background check applications (according to the DEL's established schedule).

If the licensee fails to submit the items above, the license will expire and the licensee must submit a new application for licensure.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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