

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1624

As Reported by House Committee On:
Early Learning & Human Services

Title: An act relating to working connections child care eligibility for vulnerable children.

Brief Description: Concerning working connections child care eligibility for vulnerable children.

Sponsors: Representatives Senn, Dent, Kagi, Lytton, Farrell, Pettigrew, Hudgins, Goodman, Frame and Slatter.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Early Learning & Human Services: 2/1/17, 2/7/17 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows families with children who are residing with the parent or legal guardian and have received child welfare services, child protective services, or a family assessment response in the previous six months to qualify for Working Connections Child Care.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & HUMAN SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Senn, Vice Chair; Dent, Ranking Minority Member; McDonald, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Frame, Goodman, Griffey, Kilduff, Klippert, Lovick, Muri and Ortiz-Self.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative McCaslin.

Staff: Dawn Eychaner (786-7135).

Background:

The Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) program is a subsidized childcare program funded through federal Child Care and Development Funds (CCDF) and Temporary

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.

Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). The Department of Early Learning (DEL) is the designated lead agency for administration of the CCDF program and sets policy for the WCCC.

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) determines eligibility for the WCCC and issues childcare subsidy payments to providers. In general, in order to qualify for the WCCC, a family must have a household income at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level and be working or participating in WorkFirst activities.

Families participating in the WCCC may receive up to 12 months of subsidized childcare and may pay a monthly copayment, depending on the family's income level. A child may not be deemed ineligible during the 12-month period due to a change in the family's circumstances.

Up to 33,000 households may receive WCCC services at any given time. If the WCCC participation reaches the paid caseload maximum of 33,000 households, the DSHS will implement a wait list. In the event of a wait list, certain groups will receive priority access to the WCCC. These groups include families receiving TANF benefits, children with special needs, and children experiencing homelessness, among others.

The DSHS provides child welfare services designed to ensure child safety, achieve permanency, and strengthen families. Child welfare services can include voluntary and in-home services, out-of-home care, case management, and other services. Child Protective Services (CPS) is responsible for investigating reported allegations of child abuse or neglect. Reports with low or moderately low risk allegations may receive a Family Assessment Response (FAR) as an alternative to a CPS investigation.

Summary of Bill:

Beginning December 1, 2018, the DEL must implement policies to allow 12 months of the WCCC eligibility for families with children who:

- are residing with a biological parent or guardian;
- have received child protective services, child welfare services, or a FAR from the DSHS in the previous six months; and
- have a childcare referral as part of the family's case management plan.

A child does not need to continue to receive DSHS services in order to maintain the WCCC eligibility for the full 12 months.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Preliminary fiscal note available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on December 1, 2018.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Suddenly ending child care for families receiving a subsidy can have lasting effects. Parents often lose subsidized child care once their CPS case is closed, which makes it more challenging to maintain a job and housing. The majority of families receiving child welfare services from the DSHS have experienced trauma and challenging systemic barriers. This bill will fill a critical gap that families face when they are reunified with their children, but their case with the DSHS has been closed. These families still have a need for services and safe, reliable child care. These are some of our most vulnerable children, and this bill looks at the needs of these children.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Senn, prime sponsor; Alise Hegle, Parent Advocacy Committee; Sophia Byrd McSherry, Washington State Office of Public Defense; Joel Ryan, Washington State Association of Headstart and Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program; Melanie Smith, Wellspring Family Services; and Emily Murphy, Children's Alliance.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.