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**SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5484**

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**State of Washington 66th Legislature 2019 Regular Session**

**By** Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators Wilson, C., Billig, Takko, Keiser, Hunt, Kuderer, and Wellman)

AN ACT Relating to implementing improvements to the early achievers program as reviewed and recommended by the joint select committee on the early achievers program; amending RCW 43.216.085, 43.216.515, 43.216.135, 43.216.087, 43.216.655, 43.216.089, and 43.216.100; adding a new section to chapter 43.216 RCW; creating new sections; and providing expiration dates.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The legislature finds that a commitment to early learning quality was established through the passage of the early start act and creation of the early achievers program. The legislature recognizes that achieving the desired child outcomes from high quality early learning and child care requires additional financial support, including the payment of living wages to providers, and that the success of the early achievers system must continue to be supported through adequate funding. Further, the legislature finds that the federal administration of children and families advises states to set child care subsidy rates at the seventy-fifth percentile of private market rates in order to ensure equal access to high quality child care. The legislature further finds that objectives of the early achievers program include providing professional development and robust training and coaching opportunities that are available in geographically diverse areas to child care and early education providers who are often small business owners and as such play a critical role in our state's economy.

(2) The legislature further finds that the department of children, youth, and families has undertaken efforts to identify professional equivalencies for early learning providers that recognize the commitment and years of experience that much of the workforce demonstrates.

(3) Therefore, the legislature intends to raise base subsidy rates for licensed child care centers and family homes to the seventy-fifth percentile of market rates and further incentivize the provision of care for infants and toddlers by considering rates for providers serving these young children. Further, the legislature intends to provide adequate funding to increase needs-based grants, scholarships, and professional development assistance, as well as reduce early achievers coaching ratios, in order to support providers in continuous improvement. The legislature further intends to support the work of the department of children, youth, and families' professional equivalencies committee and the department's development of the proficiency review process.

**Sec.**  RCW 43.216.085 and 2017 3rd sp.s. c 6 s 113 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The department, in collaboration with tribal governments and community and statewide partners, shall implement a quality rating and improvement system, called the early achievers program. The early achievers program provides a foundation of quality for the early care and education system. The early achievers program is applicable to licensed or certified child care centers and homes and early learning programs such as working connections child care and early childhood education and assistance programs.

(2) The objectives of the early achievers program are to:

(a) Improve short-term and long-term educational outcomes for children as measured by assessments including, but not limited to, the Washington kindergarten inventory of developing skills in RCW 28A.655.080;

(b) Give parents clear and easily accessible information about the quality of child care and early education programs;

(c) Support improvement in early learning and child care programs throughout the state;

(d) Increase the readiness of children for school;

(e) Close the disparities in access to quality care;

(f) Provide professional development and coaching opportunities to early child care and education providers; and

(g) Establish a common set of expectations and standards that define, measure, and improve the quality of early learning and child care settings.

(3)(a) Licensed or certified child care centers and homes serving nonschool-age children and receiving state subsidy payments must participate in the early achievers program by the required deadlines established in RCW 43.216.135.

(b) Approved early childhood education and assistance program providers receiving state-funded support must participate in the early achievers program by the required deadlines established in RCW 43.216.515.

(c) Participation in the early achievers program is voluntary for:

(i) Licensed or certified child care centers and homes not receiving state subsidy payments; and

(ii) Early learning programs not receiving state funds.

(d) School-age child care providers are exempt from participating in the early achievers program. By July 1, 2017, the department and the office of the superintendent of public instruction shall jointly design a plan to incorporate school-age child care providers into the early achievers program or other appropriate quality improvement system. To test implementation of the early achievers system for school-age child care providers the department and the office of the superintendent of public instruction shall implement a pilot program.

(4)(a) There are five primary levels in the early achievers program.

(b) In addition to the primary levels, the department must establish an intermediate level that is between level 3 and level 4 and serves to assist participants in transitioning to level 4.

(c) Participants are expected to actively engage and continually advance within the program.

(5) The department has the authority to determine the rating cycle for the early achievers program. The department shall streamline and eliminate duplication between early achievers standards and state child care rules in order to reduce costs associated with the early achievers rating cycle and child care licensing.

(a) Early achievers program participants may request to be rated at any time after the completion of all level 2 activities.

(b) The department shall provide an early achievers program participant an update on the participant's progress toward completing level 2 activities after the participant has been enrolled in the early achievers program for fifteen months.

(c) The first rating is free for early achievers program participants.

(d) Each subsequent rating within the established rating cycle is free for early achievers program participants.

(6)(a) Early achievers program participants may request to be rerated outside the established rating cycle. A rerating shall reset the rating cycle timeline for participants.

(b) The department may charge a fee for optional rerating requests made by program participants that are outside the established rating cycle.

(c) Fees charged are based on, but may not exceed, the cost to the department for activities associated with the early achievers program.

(7)(a) The department must create a single source of information for parents and caregivers to access details on a provider's early achievers program rating level, licensing history, and other indicators of quality and safety that will help parents and caregivers make informed choices. The licensing history that the department must provide for parents and caregivers pursuant to this subsection shall only include license suspension, surrender, revocation, denial, stayed suspension, or reinstatement. No unfounded child abuse or neglect reports may be provided to parents and caregivers pursuant to this subsection.

(b) The department shall publish to the department's web site, or offer a link on its web site to, the following information:

(i) ((~~By November 1, 2015,~~)) Early achievers program rating levels 1 through 5 for all child care programs that receive state subsidy, early childhood education and assistance programs, and federal head start programs in Washington; and

(ii) New early achievers program ratings within thirty days after a program becomes licensed or certified, or receives a rating.

(c) The early achievers program rating levels shall be published in a manner that is easily accessible to parents and caregivers and takes into account the linguistic needs of parents and caregivers.

(d) The department must publish early achievers program rating levels for child care programs that do not receive state subsidy but have voluntarily joined the early achievers program.

(e) Early achievers program participants who have published rating levels on the department's web site or on a link on the department's web site may include a brief description of their program, contingent upon the review and approval by the department, as determined by established marketing standards.

(8)(a) The department shall create a professional development pathway for early achievers program participants to obtain a high school diploma or equivalency or higher education credential in early childhood education, early childhood studies, child development, or an academic field related to early care and education.

(b) The professional development pathway must include opportunities for scholarships and grants to assist early achievers program participants with the costs associated with obtaining an educational degree.

(c) The department shall address cultural and linguistic diversity when developing the professional development pathway.

(9) The early achievers quality improvement awards shall be reserved for participants offering programs to an enrollment population consisting of at least five percent of children receiving a state subsidy.

(10) In collaboration with tribal governments, community and statewide partners, and the early achievers review subcommittee created in RCW 43.216.075, the department shall develop a protocol for granting early achievers program participants an extension in meeting rating level requirement timelines outlined for the working connections child care program and the early childhood education and assistance program.

(a) The department may grant extensions only under exceptional circumstances, such as when early achievers program participants experience an unexpected life circumstance.

(b) Extensions shall not exceed six months, and early achievers program participants are only eligible for one extension in meeting rating level requirement timelines.

(c) Extensions may only be granted to early achievers program participants who have demonstrated engagement in the early achievers program.

(11)(a) The department shall accept national accreditation that meets the requirements of this subsection (11) as a qualification for the early achievers program ratings.

(b) Each national accreditation agency will be allowed to submit its most current standards of accreditation to establish potential credit earned in the early achievers program. The department shall grant credit to accreditation bodies that can demonstrate that their standards meet or exceed the current early achievers program standards. By December 1, 2019, the department must submit a detailed plan to the governor and the legislature to implement a robust cross-accreditation process with multiple pathways that allows a provider to earn equivalent early achievers credit resulting from accreditation by high quality national organizations.

(c) Licensed child care centers and child care home providers must meet national accreditation standards approved by the department for the early achievers program in order to be granted credit for the early achievers program standards. Eligibility for the early achievers program is not subject to bargaining, mediation, or interest arbitration under RCW 41.56.028, consistent with the legislative reservation of rights under RCW 41.56.028(4)(d).

(12) The department shall explore the use of alternative quality assessment tools that meet the culturally specific needs of the federally recognized tribes in the state of Washington.

(13) A child care or early learning program that is operated by a federally recognized tribe and receives state funds shall participate in the early achievers program. The tribe may choose to participate through an interlocal agreement between the tribe and the department. The interlocal agreement must reflect the government-to-government relationship between the state and the tribe, including recognition of tribal sovereignty. The interlocal agreement must provide that:

(a) Tribal child care facilities and early learning programs may volunteer, but are not required, to be licensed by the department;

(b) Tribal child care facilities and early learning programs are not required to have their early achievers program rating level published to the department's web site or through a link on the department's web site; and

(c) Tribal child care facilities and early learning programs must provide notification to parents or guardians who apply for or have been admitted into their program that early achievers program rating level information is available and provide the parents or guardians with the program's early achievers program rating level upon request.

(14) The department shall consult with the early achievers review subcommittee on all substantial policy changes to the early achievers program.

(15) Nothing in this section changes the department's responsibility to collectively bargain over mandatory subjects or limits the legislature's authority to make programmatic modifications to licensed child care and early learning programs under RCW 41.56.028(4)(d).

**Sec.**  RCW 43.216.515 and 2015 3rd sp.s. c 7 s 9 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) Approved early childhood education and assistance programs shall receive state-funded support through the department. Public or private organizations((~~,~~)) including, but not limited to, school districts, educational service districts, community and technical colleges, local governments, or nonprofit organizations, are eligible to participate as providers of the state early childhood education and assistance program.

(2) Funds obtained by providers through voluntary grants or contributions from individuals, agencies, corporations, or organizations may be used to expand or enhance preschool programs so long as program standards established by the department are maintained.

(3) Persons applying to conduct the early childhood education and assistance program shall identify targeted groups and the number of children to be served, program components, the qualifications of instructional and special staff, the source and amount of grants or contributions from sources other than state funds, facilities and equipment support, and transportation and personal care arrangements.

(4) ((~~Existing early childhood education and assistance program providers must complete the following requirements to be eligible to receive state-funded support under the early childhood education and assistance program:~~

~~(a) Enroll in the early achievers program by October 1, 2015;~~

~~(b) Rate at a level 4 or 5 in the early achievers program by March 1, 2016. If an early childhood education and assistance program provider rates below a level 4 by March 1, 2016, the provider must complete remedial activities with the department, and rate at a level 4 or 5 within six months of beginning remedial activities.~~

~~(5) Effective October 1, 2015,~~)) A new early childhood education and assistance program provider must complete the requirements in this subsection ((~~(5)~~)) to be eligible to receive state-funded support under the early childhood education and assistance program:

(a) Enroll in the early achievers program within thirty days of the start date of the early childhood education and assistance program contract;

(b)(i) Except as provided in (b)(ii) of this subsection, rate at a level 4 or 5 in the early achievers program within ((~~twelve~~)) twenty-four months of enrollment. If an early childhood education and assistance program provider rates below a level 4 within ((~~twelve~~)) twenty-four months of enrollment, the provider must complete remedial activities with the department, and rate at a level 4 or 5 within six months of beginning remedial activities.

(ii) Licensed or certified child care centers and homes that administer an early childhood education and assistance program shall rate at a level 4 or 5 in the early achievers program within ((~~eighteen~~)) twenty-four months of the start date of the early childhood education and assistance program contract. If an early childhood education and assistance program provider rates below a level 4 within ((~~eighteen~~)) twenty-four months, the provider must complete remedial activities with the department, and rate at a level 4 or 5 within six months of beginning remedial activities.

((~~(6)~~)) (5)(a) If an early childhood education and assistance program provider has successfully completed all of the required early achievers program activities and is waiting to be rated by the deadline provided in this section, the provider may continue to participate in the early achievers program as an approved early childhood education and assistance program provider and receive state subsidy pending the successful completion of a level 4 or 5 rating.

(b) To avoid disruption, the department may allow for early childhood education and assistance program providers who have rated below a level 4 after completion of the six-month remedial period to continue to provide services until the current school year is finished.

(6)(a) When an early childhood education and assistance program in good standing changes classroom locations to a comparable or improved space within the same facility, a rerating is not required outside of the regular rerating and renewal cycle.

(b) When an early childhood education and assistance program in good standing moves to a new facility, the provider must notify the department of the move within six months of changing locations in order to retain their existing rating. The early achievers program must conduct an observational visit to ensure the new classroom space is of comparable or improved environmental quality. If a provider fails to notify the department within six months of a move, the early achievers rating must be changed from the posted rated level to "Participating, Not Yet Rated" and the provider will cease to receive tiered reimbursement incentives until a new rating is completed.

(7) The department shall collect data periodically to determine the demand for full-day programming for early childhood education and assistance program providers. The department shall analyze this demand by geographic region and shall include the findings in the annual report required under RCW ((~~43.215.102~~)) 43.216.089.

(8) ((~~By December 1, 2015,~~)) The department shall develop ((~~a~~)) multiple pathways for licensed or certified child care centers and homes to administer an early childhood education and assistance program. The pathways shall include an accommodation for these providers to rate at a level 4 or 5 in the early achievers program according to the timelines and standards established in subsection ((~~(5)~~)) (4)(b)(ii) of this section. The department must consider using the intermediate level that is between level 3 and level 4 as described in RCW 43.216.085, incentives, and front-end funding in order to encourage providers to participate in the pathway.

**Sec.**  RCW 43.216.135 and 2018 c 52 s 6 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The department shall establish and implement policies in the working connections child care program to promote stability and quality of care for children from low-income households. These policies shall focus on supporting school readiness for young learners. Policies for the expenditure of funds constituting the working connections child care program must be consistent with the outcome measures established by the department and the standards established in this section intended to promote stability, quality, and continuity of early care and education programming.

(2) As recommended by Public Law 113-186, authorizations for the working connections child care subsidy shall be effective for twelve months beginning July 1, 2016, unless an earlier date is provided in the omnibus appropriations act.

(3) Existing child care providers serving nonschool-age children and receiving state subsidy payments must complete the following requirements to be eligible for a state subsidy under this section:

(a) Enroll in the early achievers program by August 1, 2016;

(b) Complete level 2 activities in the early achievers program by August 1, 2017; and

(c) Rate or request to be rated at a level 3 or higher in the early achievers program by December 31, 2019. If a child care provider ((~~rates below~~)) does not rate at or request to be rated at a level 3 by December 31, 2019, the provider is no longer eligible to receive state subsidy. If the provider rates below a level 3 when the rating is released, the provider must complete remedial activities with the department, and ((~~rate at~~)) must rate at or request to be rated at a level 3 or higher no later than ((~~June~~)) December 30, 2020.

(4) ((~~Effective July 1, 2016,~~)) A new child care provider serving nonschool-age children and receiving state subsidy payments must complete the following activities to be eligible to receive a state subsidy under this section:

(a) Enroll in the early achievers program within thirty days of receiving the initial state subsidy payment;

(b) Complete level 2 activities in the early achievers program within twelve months of enrollment; and

(c) Rate or request to be rated at a level 3 or higher in the early achievers program within thirty months of enrollment. If a child care provider ((~~rates below~~)) does not rate or request to be rated at a level 3 within thirty months from enrollment into the early achievers program, the provider is no longer eligible to receive state subsidy. If the provider rates below a level 3 when the rating is released, the provider must complete remedial activities with the department, and rate or request to be rated at a level 3 or higher within ((~~six~~)) twelve months of beginning remedial activities.

(5) If a child care provider does not rate or request to be rated at a level 3 or higher following the remedial period, the provider is no longer eligible to receive state subsidy under this section. If a child care provider does not rate at a level 3 or higher when the rating is released following the remedial period, the provider is no longer eligible to receive state subsidy under this section.

(6) If a child care provider serving nonschool-age children and receiving state subsidy payments has successfully completed all level 2 activities and is waiting to be rated by the deadline provided in this section, the provider may continue to receive a state subsidy pending the successful completion of the level 3 rating activity.

(7) The department shall implement tiered reimbursement for early achievers program participants in the working connections child care program rating at level 3, 4, or 5.

(8) The department shall account for a child care copayment collected by the provider from the family for each contracted slot and establish the copayment fee by rule.

(9)(a) The department shall establish and implement policies in the working connections child care program to allow eligibility for families with children who:

(i) In the last six months have:

(A) Received child protective services as defined and used by chapters 26.44 and 74.13 RCW;

(B) Received child welfare services as defined and used by chapter 74.13 RCW; or

(C) Received services through a family assessment response as defined and used by chapter 26.44 RCW;

(ii) Have been referred for child care as part of the family's case management as defined by RCW 74.13.020; and

(iii) Are residing with a biological parent or guardian.

(b) Children who are eligible for working connections child care pursuant to this subsection do not have to keep receiving services identified in this subsection to maintain twelve-month authorization. The department of social and health services' involvement with the family referred for working connections child care ends when the family's child protective services, child welfare services, or family assessment response case is closed.

**Sec.**  RCW 43.216.087 and 2015 3rd sp.s. c 7 s 5 are each amended to read as follows:

(1)(a) The department shall, in collaboration with tribal governments and community and statewide partners, implement a protocol to maximize and encourage participation in the early achievers program for culturally diverse and low-income center and family home child care providers. Amounts appropriated for the encouragement of culturally diverse and low-income center and family home child care provider participation shall be appropriated separately from the other funds appropriated for the department, are the only funds that may be used for the protocol, and may not be used for any other purposes. Funds appropriated for the protocol shall be considered an ongoing program for purposes of future departmental budget requests.

(b) ((~~During the first thirty months of implementation of the early achievers program~~)) The department shall prioritize the resources authorized in this section to assist providers ((~~rating at a level 2~~)) in the early achievers program to help them reach a ((~~level 3~~)) rating of level 3 or higher wherever access to subsidized care is at risk.

(2) The protocol should address barriers to early achievers program participation and include at a minimum the following:

(a) The creation of a substitute pool;

(b) The development of needs-based grants for providers ((~~at level 2~~)) in the early achievers program ((~~to assist with~~)) who demonstrate a need for assistance to improve program quality. Needs-based grants may be used for environmental improvements of early learning facilities; purchasing curriculum development, instructional materials, supplies, and equipment ((~~to improve program quality~~)); and focused infant-toddler improvements. Priority for the needs-based grants shall be given to culturally diverse and low-income providers;

(c) The development of materials and assessments in a timely manner, and to the extent feasible, in the provider and family home languages; and

(d) The development of flexibility in technical assistance and coaching structures to provide differentiated types and amounts of support to providers based on individual need and cultural context.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The department of children, youth, and families must analyze consumer income and copay requirements in the working connections child care program and report recommendations to the governor and the legislature by December 1, 2019, for mitigating the "cliff effect" for child care subsidy consumers. Recommendations must consider:

(a) How to further develop and implement a sliding scale or tiered reimbursement and phase-out model that works for both consumers and providers and provides incentives for quality child care across communities;

(b) Whether or not increasing or decreasing the eligibility threshold for working connections child care would allow parents to grow professionally without losing affordable child care; and

(c) Whether further graduation of the copay scale would help alleviate the cliff that occurs at subsidy cutoff.

(2) This section expires January 1, 2020.

**Sec.**  RCW 43.216.655 and 2015 3rd sp.s. c 7 s 13 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The education data center established in RCW 43.41.400 must collect longitudinal, student-level data on all children attending an early childhood education and assistance program. Upon completion of an electronic time and attendance record system, the education data center must collect longitudinal, student-level data on all children attending a working connections child care program. Data collected should capture at a minimum the following characteristics:

(a) Daily program attendance;

(b) Identification of classroom and teacher;

(c) Early achievers program quality level rating;

(d) Program hours;

(e) Program duration;

(f) Developmental results from the Washington kindergarten inventory of developing skills in RCW 28A.655.080; and

(g) To the extent data is available, the distinct ethnic categories within racial subgroups of children and providers that align with categories recognized by the education data center.

(2) The department shall provide early learning providers student-level data collected pursuant to this section that are specific to the early learning provider's program. Upon completion of an electronic time and attendance record system identified in subsection (1) of this section, the department shall provide child care providers student-level data that are specific to the child care provider's program.

(3)((~~(a)~~)) The department shall review available research and best practices literature on cultural competency in early learning settings. The department shall review the K-12 components for cultural competency developed by the professional educator standards board and identify components appropriate for early learning professional development.

((~~(b) By July 31, 2016, the department shall provide recommendations to the appropriate committees of the legislature and the early learning advisory council on research-based cultural competency standards for early learning professional training.~~))

(4)(a) The Washington state institute for public policy shall conduct a longitudinal analysis examining relationships between the early achievers program quality ratings levels and outcomes for children participating in subsidized early care and education programs.

(b) The institute shall submit the first report to the appropriate committees of the legislature and the early learning advisory council by December 31, 2019. The institute shall submit subsequent reports annually to the appropriate committees of the legislature and the early learning advisory council by December 31st, with the final report due December 31, 2022. The final report shall include a cost-benefit analysis.

(5)((~~(a) By December 1, 2015, the department shall provide recommendations to the appropriate committees of the legislature on child attendance policies pertaining to the working connections child care program and the early childhood education and assistance program. The recommendations shall include the following:~~

~~(i) Allowable periods of child absences;~~

~~(ii) Required contact with parents or caregivers to discuss child absences and encourage regular program attendance; and~~

~~(iii) A de-enrollment procedure when allowable child absences are exceeded.~~

~~(b) The department shall develop recommendations on child absences and attendance within the department's appropriations.~~)) By December 31, 2021, the Washington state institute for public policy shall update the outcome evaluation of the early childhood education and assistance program required by chapter 16, Laws of 2013 and report to the governor and the legislature on the outcomes of program participants. The evaluation must examine short and long-term impacts on program participants, including high school graduation rates for up to two cohorts. When conducting the evaluation, the institute must consider, to the extent that data is available, the education levels of early childhood education and assistance program staff and the effects of full-day programming and half-day programming on outcomes.

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

The department must adopt administrative policies in the early achievers program to:

(1) Consider child care provider schedules and needs and allow flexibility when scheduling data collection and rating visits at a facility;

(2) Eliminate rating scale barriers and weight early achievers points to incentivize providers to serve infants and toddlers;

(3) Remove barriers to timely approvals for one-on-one behavioral support assistants when requested by a provider;

(4) Prioritize reratings for providers rated at a level 2;

(5) Prioritize reratings for providers rated at a level 3 who are seeking to become early childhood education and assistance program providers;

(6) Require trauma-informed care training for raters and coaches; and

(7) Provide continuous and robust postrating feedback to providers.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) By December 1, 2019, the department of children, youth, and families must submit to the governor and the legislature a plan to pay providers an enhanced rate, award additional early achievers points, and create a corresponding trauma-informed care designation for providers serving behaviorally challenged children.

(2) This section expires December 30, 2019.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) By December 1, 2019, the department of children, youth, and families must evaluate options and propose recommendations to the governor and legislature related to paying child care subsidy providers a set monthly rate rather than a daily rate.

(2) This section expires December 30, 2019.

**Sec.**  RCW 43.216.089 and 2015 3rd sp.s. c 7 s 18 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) Beginning December 15, 2015, and each December 15th thereafter, the department, in collaboration with the statewide child care resource and referral organization, and the early achievers review subcommittee of the early learning advisory council, shall submit, in compliance with RCW 43.01.036, a progress report to the governor and the legislature regarding providers' progress in the early achievers program. Each progress report must include the following elements:

(a) The number, and relative percentage, of family child care and center providers who have enrolled in the early achievers program and who have:

(i) Completed the level 2 activities;

(ii) Completed rating readiness consultation and are waiting to be rated;

(iii) Achieved the required rating level to remain eligible for state-funded support under the early childhood education and assistance program or a subsidy under the working connections child care program;

(iv) Not achieved the required rating level initially but qualified for and are working through intensive targeted support in preparation for a partial rerate outside the standard rating cycle;

(v) Not achieved the required rating level initially and engaged in remedial activities before successfully achieving the required rating level;

(vi) Not achieved the required rating level after completing remedial activities; or

(vii) Received an extension from the department based on exceptional circumstances pursuant to RCW ((~~43.215.100~~)) 43.216.085;

(b) A review of the services available to providers and children from diverse cultural backgrounds;

(c) An examination of the effectiveness of efforts to increase successful participation by providers serving children and families from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and providers who serve children from low-income households;

(d) A description of the primary obstacles and challenges faced by providers who have not achieved the required rating level to remain eligible to receive:

(i) A subsidy under the working connections child care program; or

(ii) State-funded support under the early childhood education and assistance program;

(e) A summary of the types of exceptional circumstances for which the department has granted an extension pursuant to RCW ((~~43.215.100~~)) 43.216.085;

(f) The average amount of time required for providers to achieve local level milestones within each level of the early achievers program;

(g) To the extent data is available, an analysis of the distribution of early achievers program-rated facilities in relation to child and provider demographics, including but not limited to race and ethnicity, home language, and geographical location;

(h) Recommendations for improving access for children from diverse cultural backgrounds to providers rated at a level 3 or higher in the early achievers program;

(i) Recommendations for improving the early achievers program standards;

(j) An analysis of any impact from quality strengthening efforts on the availability and quality of infant and toddler care;

(k) The number of contracted slots that use both early childhood education and assistance program funding and working connections child care program funding; and

(l) A description of the early childhood education and assistance program implementation to include the following:

(i) Progress on early childhood education and assistance program implementation as required pursuant to RCW ((~~43.215.415, 43.215.425, and 43.215.455~~)) 43.216.515, 43.216.525, and 43.216.555;

(ii) An examination of the regional distribution of new preschool programming by zip code;

(iii) An analysis of the impact of preschool expansion on low-income neighborhoods and communities;

(iv) Recommendations to address any identified barriers to access to quality preschool for children living in low-income neighborhoods;

(v) An analysis of any impact of extended day early care and education opportunities directives;

(vi) An examination of any identified barriers for providers to offer extended day early care and education opportunities;

(vii) An analysis of the demand for full-day programming for early childhood education and assistance program providers required under RCW ((~~43.215.415~~)) 43.216.515; and

(viii) To the extent data is available, an analysis of the cultural diversity of early childhood education and assistance program providers and participants.

(2) The first annual report due under subsection (1) of this section also shall include a description of the early achievers program extension protocol required under RCW ((~~43.215.100~~)) 43.216.085.

(3) The elements required to be reported under subsection (1)(a) of this section must be reported at the county level, and for those counties with a population of five hundred thousand and higher, the data must be reported at the zip code level.

(4) If, based on information in an annual report submitted in 2018 or later under this section, fifteen percent or more of the licensed or contracted providers who are participating in the early achievers program in a county or in a single zip code have not achieved the rating levels under RCW ((~~43.215.135~~)) 43.216.135 and ((~~43.215.415~~)) 43.216.515, the department must:

(a) Analyze the reasons providers in the affected counties or zip codes have not attained the required rating levels; and

(b) Develop a plan to mitigate the effect on the children and families served by these providers. The plan must be submitted to the legislature as part of the annual progress report along with any recommendations for legislative action to address the needs of the providers and the children and families they serve.

**Sec.**  RCW 43.216.100 and 2016 c 72 s 701 are each amended to read as follows:

The department, in collaboration with the office of the superintendent of public instruction, shall create a community information and involvement plan to inform home-based, tribal, and family early learning providers of the early achievers program under RCW ((~~43.215.100~~)) 43.216.085.

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