

2SHB 1152 - H AMD 139

By Representative Kagi

ADOPTED AS AMENDED 03/09/2005

1 Strike everything after the enacting clause and insert the
2 following:

3 "NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that parents are
4 their children's first and most important teachers, caregivers, and
5 decision makers. The legislature also recognizes that many parents are
6 employed or in school and must seek services in their communities to
7 assist with the care and support of their children. Welfare reform
8 requires parents with low incomes to enter the work force while their
9 children are young, increasing parents' need for the support of such
10 resources. In seeking out resources in their communities to provide
11 care and support for their children, parents throughout the state need
12 and deserve to have the best possible information to help inform their
13 choices about the care and education of their children.

14 The legislature also finds that research on brain development in
15 young children establishes that early experiences are important to
16 children's emotional, social, physical, and cognitive development.
17 Research also shows a clear and compelling connection between the
18 quality of children's early childhood care and education experiences
19 and later success in school and in life.

20 The legislature intends to build on the efforts of communities
21 across the state to improve the quality of early learning environments
22 available to children and their families, as well as the information
23 available to families relating to those early learning environments.
24 The legislature recognizes that efforts to improve early learning must
25 build upon existing partnerships between the public and private
26 sectors. The experiences and resources of both public and private
27 entities are essential to making meaningful and lasting improvements in
28 the quality of early learning environments across the state. Statewide
29 leadership is needed to guide and support the efforts of the private

1 and public sectors working together to make systemwide improvements in
2 the quality, affordability, and accessibility of early learning
3 opportunities.

4 The legislature intends to establish an effective oversight body,
5 composed of representation from the public and private sectors, to
6 provide leadership and vision to strengthen the quality of early
7 learning services and programs for all children and families in the
8 state and to ensure that children enter school ready to succeed.

9 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** The definitions in this section apply
10 throughout sections 1 through 6 of this act unless the context clearly
11 requires otherwise.

12 (1) "Early learning programs and services" include the following:
13 Child care; state, private, and nonprofit preschool programs; child
14 care subsidy programs; and training and professional development
15 programs for early learning professionals.

16 (2) "Council" means the Washington early learning council.

17 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** (1) The Washington early learning council is
18 established in the governor's office. The purpose of the council is to
19 provide vision, leadership, and direction to the improvement,
20 realignment, and expansion of early learning programs and services for
21 children birth to five years of age in order to better meet the early
22 learning needs of children and their families. The goal of the council
23 is to build upon existing efforts and recommend new initiatives, as
24 necessary, to create an adequately financed, high-quality, accessible,
25 and comprehensive early learning system that benefits all young
26 children whose parents choose it.

27 (2) The council shall develop an early learning plan to improve the
28 organization of early learning programs and services at the state
29 level, and to improve the accessibility and quality of early learning
30 programs and services throughout the state.

31 (a) By November 15, 2005, the council shall make recommendations to
32 the governor and the appropriate committees of the legislature
33 concerning statewide organization of early learning.

34 (b) The council shall also make recommendations to the governor and
35 the appropriate committees of the legislature concerning the following:

1 (i) Identification of current populations being served and
2 potential populations to be served by early learning programs and
3 services;

4 (ii) The state's role in supporting quality early learning programs
5 and services;

6 (iii) Appropriate levels and sources of stable and sustainable
7 funding to meet statewide and local need for early learning programs
8 and services, including public-private partnerships;

9 (iv) Changes in existing early learning programs and services,
10 including the administration of those programs and services, to improve
11 their efficiency, effectiveness, and quality;

12 (v) Changes in existing early learning programs and services to
13 ensure that the content is aligned with what children need to know and
14 be able to do upon entering school;

15 (vi) How to maximize available early learning resources to ensure
16 children are receiving continuity of care; and

17 (vii) Providing for smooth transitions from early learning programs
18 and services to K-12 programs.

19 (c) As provided in sections 5 and 6 of this act, the council shall
20 focus on quality improvements to licensed child care through the
21 following mechanisms:

22 (i) A voluntary, quality-based, graduated rating system to provide
23 information to parents on the quality of child care programs and to
24 provide resources and incentives for quality improvements; and

25 (ii) A tiered-reimbursement system for state-subsidized child care
26 to improve the quality of care for children participating in state-
27 funded care.

28 (d) The council shall make recommendations to the governor and the
29 appropriate committees of the legislature concerning the regulation of
30 child care, including child care that is exempt from regulation and
31 unlicensed child care that is subject to regulation, in order to ensure
32 the safety, health, quality, and accessibility of child care services
33 throughout the state.

34 (3) The council shall serve as the advisory committee on early
35 learning to the comprehensive education study steering committee,
36 created in Substitute House Bill No. 1380. The nongovernmental cochair
37 of the council shall serve as the chair of the advisory committee on

1 early learning. The council shall have input on the recommendations
2 developed by the comprehensive education study steering committee.

3 (4) The council shall make use of existing reports, research,
4 planning efforts, and programs, including, but not limited to, the
5 following: The federal early head start program, the federal head
6 start program, the state early childhood education and assistance
7 program, the state's essential academic learning requirements and K-3
8 grade level expectations, the Washington state early learning and
9 development benchmarks, existing tiered-reimbursement initiatives, the
10 state's early childhood comprehensive systems plan, and the work of the
11 child care coordinating committee established pursuant to RCW
12 74.13.090.

13 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** (1) The council shall include representation
14 from public, nonprofit, and for-profit entities, and its membership
15 shall reflect regional, racial, and cultural diversity to ensure
16 representation of the needs of all children and families in the state.

17 (2) The council shall consist of seventeen members, as follows:

18 (a) One representative each of the governor's office, the
19 department of social and health services, the department of health, and
20 the state board for community and technical colleges, appointed by the
21 governor;

22 (b) One representative of the office of superintendent of public
23 instruction, appointed by the superintendent of public instruction;

24 (c) Two representatives of private business and two representatives
25 of philanthropy, appointed by the governor;

26 (d) Four individuals who have demonstrated leadership and
27 engagement in the field of early learning, appointed by the governor;
28 and

29 (e) Two members of the house of representatives appointed by the
30 speaker of the house of representatives, one of whom shall be a member
31 of the majority caucus and one of whom shall be a member of the
32 minority caucus, and two members of the senate appointed by the
33 president of the senate, one of whom shall be a member of the majority
34 caucus and one of whom shall be a member of the minority caucus.

35 (3) The council shall be cochaired by the representative of the
36 governor's office and a nongovernmental member designated by the
37 governor.

1 (4) Members of the council shall be compensated in accordance with
2 RCW 43.03.240 and shall be reimbursed for travel expenses as provided
3 in RCW 43.03.050 and 43.03.060.

4 (5) The governor may employ an executive director, who is exempt
5 from the provisions of chapter 41.06 RCW, and such other staff as is
6 necessary to carry out the purposes of sections 1 through 6 of this
7 act. The governor pursuant to RCW 43.03.040 shall fix the salary of
8 the executive director.

9 (6) The council shall monitor and measure its progress and
10 regularly report, as appropriate, to the governor and the appropriate
11 committees of the legislature on the progress, findings, and
12 recommendations of the council.

13 (7) The council shall establish one or more technical advisory
14 committees, as needed. Membership of such advisory committees may
15 include the following: Representatives of any state agency the council
16 deems appropriate, including the higher education coordinating board
17 and the state board for community and technical colleges; family home
18 child care providers, child care center providers, and college or
19 university child care providers; parents; early childhood development
20 experts; representatives of school districts and teachers involved in
21 the provision of child care and preschool programs; representatives of
22 resource and referral programs; parent education specialists; pediatric
23 or other health professionals; representatives of citizen groups
24 concerned with child care and early learning; representatives of labor
25 organizations; representatives of private business; and representatives
26 of head start and early childhood education assistance program
27 agencies.

28 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** (1) The council shall develop a voluntary,
29 quality-based, graduated rating system consisting of levels of quality
30 to be achieved by licensed child care providers serving children and
31 families in the state. The purpose of the rating system is to provide
32 families with vital information about the quality of early learning
33 programs available to them and to increase the quality of early
34 learning programs operating throughout the state. In developing the
35 voluntary rating system, the council shall seek to build upon existing
36 partnerships and initiate new partnerships between the public and
37 private sectors.

1 (2) In developing the voluntary rating system, the council shall
2 establish a system of tiers as the basis for the rating system's levels
3 of quality. In developing the system of tiers, the council shall take
4 into consideration the following quality criteria:

- 5 (a) Child-to-staff ratios;
- 6 (b) Group size;
- 7 (c) Learning environment, including staff and child interactions;
- 8 (d) Curriculum;
- 9 (e) Parent and family involvement and support;
- 10 (f) Staff qualifications and training;
- 11 (g) Staff professional development;
- 12 (h) Staff compensation;
- 13 (i) Staff stability;
- 14 (j) Accreditation;
- 15 (k) Program evaluation; and
- 16 (l) Program administrative policies and procedures.

17 (3) In developing the voluntary rating system, the council shall
18 establish quality assurance measures as well as a mechanism for system
19 evaluation.

20 (4) In developing the voluntary rating system, the council shall
21 make recommendations concerning both initial and subsequent statewide
22 implementation of the rating system, including the following:

- 23 (a) Potential implementing entities;
- 24 (b) Sources of funding for implementation;
- 25 (c) Necessary infrastructure for facilitating and supporting
26 participation in the rating system, including assistance necessary to
27 help providers progress up the tiers; and
- 28 (d) Strategies for raising public awareness of the rating system.

29 (5) The council shall complete initial development of the voluntary
30 rating system by December 1, 2005, and complete development by December
31 1, 2006.

32 (6) The council shall submit the voluntary rating system to the
33 governor and the appropriate fiscal and policy committees of the
34 legislature by January 1, 2007. If no action is taken by the
35 legislature by the end of the 2007 regular legislative session, the
36 council may begin initial implementation of the voluntary rating
37 system, subject to available funding.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** (1) The council shall develop a tiered-
2 reimbursement system that provides higher rates of reimbursement for
3 state-subsidized child care for licensed child care providers that
4 achieve one or more levels of quality above basic licensing
5 requirements in accordance with the voluntary quality-based graduated
6 rating system developed pursuant to section 5 of this act.

7 (2) In developing the tiered-reimbursement system, the council
8 shall review existing tiered-reimbursement initiatives in the state and
9 integrate those initiatives into the tiered-reimbursement system.

10 (3) The council shall complete initial development of the tiered-
11 reimbursement system by December 1, 2005, to be implemented in two
12 pilot sites in different geographic regions of the state with
13 demonstrated public-private partnerships. The council shall complete
14 development of the tiered-reimbursement system by December 1, 2006, to
15 be implemented statewide.

16 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 7.** A new section is added to chapter 74.15 RCW
17 to read as follows:

18 (1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this
19 specific purpose, the department of social and health services shall
20 implement the tiered-reimbursement system developed pursuant to section
21 6 of this act. Implementation of the tiered-reimbursement system shall
22 initially consist of two pilot sites in different geographic regions of
23 the state with demonstrated public-private partnerships, with statewide
24 implementation to follow.

25 (2) In implementing the tiered-reimbursement system, consideration
26 shall be given to child care providers who provide staff wage
27 progression.

28 (3) The department shall begin implementation of the two pilot
29 sites by March 30, 2006.

30 **Sec. 8.** RCW 28B.135.030 and 1999 c 375 s 3 are each amended to
31 read as follows:

32 The higher education coordinating board shall administer the
33 program for four-year institutions of higher education. The state
34 board for community and technical colleges shall administer the program
35 for community and technical colleges. The higher education

1 coordinating board and the state board for community and technical
2 colleges shall have the following powers and duties in administering
3 each program:

4 (1) To adopt rules necessary to carry out the program;

5 (2) To establish one or more review committees to assist in the
6 evaluation of proposals for funding. The review committee shall
7 include but not be limited to individuals from the Washington
8 association for the education of young children(~~(, the child care~~
9 ~~coordinating committee,)) and the child care resource and referral
10 network;~~

11 (3) To establish each biennium specific guidelines for submitting
12 grant proposals consistent with the overall goals of the program.
13 During the 1999-2001 biennium the guidelines shall be consistent with
14 the following desired outcomes of increasing access to child care for
15 students, addressing the demand for infant and toddler care, providing
16 affordable child care alternatives, creating more cooperative preschool
17 programs, creating models that can be replicated at other institutions,
18 creating a partnership between university or college administrations
19 and student government, or its equivalent and increasing efficiency and
20 innovation at campus child care centers;

21 (4) To establish guidelines for an allocation system based on
22 factors that include but are not limited to: The amount of money
23 available in the trust fund; characteristics of the institutions
24 including the size of the faculty and student body; and the number of
25 child care grants received;

26 (5) To solicit grant proposals and provide information to the
27 institutions of higher education about the program; and

28 (6) To establish reporting, evaluation, accountability, monitoring,
29 and dissemination requirements for the recipients of the grants.

30 **Sec. 9.** RCW 41.04.385 and 2002 c 354 s 236 are each amended to
31 read as follows:

32 The legislature finds that (1) demographic, economic, and social
33 trends underlie a critical and increasing demand for child care in the
34 state of Washington; (2) working parents and their children benefit
35 when the employees' child care needs have been resolved; (3) the state
36 of Washington should serve as a model employer by creating a supportive
37 atmosphere, to the extent feasible, in which its employees may meet

1 their child care needs; and (4) the state of Washington should
2 encourage the development of partnerships between state agencies, state
3 employees, state employee labor organizations, and private employers to
4 expand the availability of affordable quality child care. The
5 legislature finds further that resolving employee child care concerns
6 not only benefits the employees and their children, but may benefit the
7 employer by reducing absenteeism, increasing employee productivity,
8 improving morale, and enhancing the employer's position in recruiting
9 and retaining employees. Therefore, the legislature declares that it
10 is the policy of the state of Washington to assist state employees by
11 creating a supportive atmosphere in which they may meet their child
12 care needs. Policies and procedures for state agencies to address
13 employee child care needs will be the responsibility of the director of
14 personnel in consultation with (~~the child care coordinating committee,~~
15 ~~as provided in RCW 74.13.090, and~~) state employee representatives.

16 **Sec. 10.** RCW 74.13.0903 and 1997 c 58 s 404 are each amended to
17 read as follows:

18 The office of child care policy is established to operate under the
19 authority of the department of social and health services. The duties
20 and responsibilities of the office include, but are not limited to, the
21 following, within appropriated funds:

22 (1) (~~Staff and assist the child care coordinating committee in the~~
23 ~~implementation of its duties under RCW 74.13.090;~~

24 ~~(2)~~) Work in conjunction with the statewide child care resource
25 and referral network as well as local governments, nonprofit
26 organizations, businesses, and community child care advocates to create
27 local child care resource and referral organizations. These
28 organizations may carry out needs assessments, resource development,
29 provider training, technical assistance, and parent information and
30 training;

31 ~~((3))~~ (2) Actively seek public and private money for distribution
32 as grants to the statewide child care resource and referral network and
33 to existing or potential local child care resource and referral
34 organizations;

35 ~~((4))~~ (3) Adopt rules regarding the application for and
36 distribution of grants to local child care resource and referral

1 organizations. The rules shall, at a minimum, require an applicant to
2 submit a plan for achieving the following objectives:

3 (a) Provide parents with information about child care resources,
4 including location of services and subsidies;

5 (b) Carry out child care provider recruitment and training
6 programs, including training under RCW 74.25.040;

7 (c) Offer support services, such as parent and provider seminars,
8 toy-lending libraries, and substitute banks;

9 (d) Provide information for businesses regarding child care supply
10 and demand;

11 (e) Advocate for increased public and private sector resources
12 devoted to child care;

13 (f) Provide technical assistance to employers regarding employee
14 child care services; and

15 (g) Serve recipients of temporary assistance for needy families and
16 working parents with incomes at or below household incomes of one
17 hundred seventy-five percent of the federal poverty line;

18 ~~((+5))~~ (4) Provide staff support and technical assistance to the
19 statewide child care resource and referral network and local child care
20 resource and referral organizations;

21 ~~((+6))~~ (5) Maintain a statewide child care licensing data bank and
22 work with department of social and health services licensors to provide
23 information to local child care resource and referral organizations
24 about licensed child care providers in the state;

25 ~~((+7))~~ (6) Through the statewide child care resource and referral
26 network and local resource and referral organizations, compile data
27 about local child care needs and availability for future planning and
28 development;

29 ~~((+8))~~ (7) Coordinate with the statewide child care resource and
30 referral network and local child care resource and referral
31 organizations for the provision of training and technical assistance to
32 child care providers; and

33 ~~((+9))~~ (8) Collect and assemble information regarding the
34 availability of insurance and of federal and other child care funding
35 to assist state and local agencies, businesses, and other child care
36 providers in offering child care services.

1 **Sec. 11.** RCW 74.15.030 and 2000 c 162 s 20 and 2000 c 122 s 40 are
2 each reenacted and amended to read as follows:

3 The secretary shall have the power and it shall be the secretary's
4 duty:

5 (1) In consultation with the children's services advisory
6 committee, and with the advice and assistance of persons representative
7 of the various type agencies to be licensed, to designate categories of
8 facilities for which separate or different requirements shall be
9 developed as may be appropriate whether because of variations in the
10 ages, sex and other characteristics of persons served, variations in
11 the purposes and services offered or size or structure of the agencies
12 to be licensed hereunder, or because of any other factor relevant
13 thereto;

14 (2) In consultation with the children's services advisory
15 committee, and with the advice and assistance of persons representative
16 of the various type agencies to be licensed, to adopt and publish
17 minimum requirements for licensing applicable to each of the various
18 categories of agencies to be licensed.

19 The minimum requirements shall be limited to:

20 (a) The size and suitability of a facility and the plan of
21 operation for carrying out the purpose for which an applicant seeks a
22 license;

23 (b) The character, suitability and competence of an agency and
24 other persons associated with an agency directly responsible for the
25 care and treatment of children, expectant mothers or developmentally
26 disabled persons. In consultation with law enforcement personnel, the
27 secretary shall investigate the conviction record or pending charges
28 and dependency record information under chapter 43.43 RCW of each
29 agency and its staff seeking licensure or relicensure. No unfounded
30 allegation of child abuse or neglect as defined in RCW 26.44.020 may be
31 disclosed to a child-placing agency, private adoption agency, or any
32 other provider licensed under this chapter. In order to determine the
33 suitability of applicants for an agency license, licensees, their
34 employees, and other persons who have unsupervised access to children
35 in care, and who have not resided in the state of Washington during the
36 three-year period before being authorized to care for children shall be
37 fingerprinted. The fingerprints shall be forwarded to the Washington
38 state patrol and federal bureau of investigation for a criminal history

1 records check. The fingerprint criminal history records checks will be
2 at the expense of the licensee except that in the case of a foster
3 family home, if this expense would work a hardship on the licensee, the
4 department shall pay the expense. The licensee may not pass this cost
5 on to the employee or prospective employee, unless the employee is
6 determined to be unsuitable due to his or her criminal history record.
7 The secretary shall use the information solely for the purpose of
8 determining eligibility for a license and for determining the
9 character, suitability, and competence of those persons or agencies,
10 excluding parents, not required to be licensed who are authorized to
11 care for children, expectant mothers, and developmentally disabled
12 persons. Criminal justice agencies shall provide the secretary such
13 information as they may have and that the secretary may require for
14 such purpose;

15 (c) The number of qualified persons required to render the type of
16 care and treatment for which an agency seeks a license;

17 (d) The safety, cleanliness, and general adequacy of the premises
18 to provide for the comfort, care and well-being of children, expectant
19 mothers or developmentally disabled persons;

20 (e) The provision of necessary care, including food, clothing,
21 supervision and discipline; physical, mental and social well-being; and
22 educational, recreational and spiritual opportunities for those served;

23 (f) The financial ability of an agency to comply with minimum
24 requirements established pursuant to chapter 74.15 RCW and RCW
25 74.13.031; and

26 (g) The maintenance of records pertaining to the admission,
27 progress, health and discharge of persons served;

28 (3) To investigate any person, including relatives by blood or
29 marriage except for parents, for character, suitability, and competence
30 in the care and treatment of children, expectant mothers, and
31 developmentally disabled persons prior to authorizing that person to
32 care for children, expectant mothers, and developmentally disabled
33 persons. However, if a child is placed with a relative under RCW
34 13.34.065 or 13.34.130, and if such relative appears otherwise suitable
35 and competent to provide care and treatment the criminal history
36 background check required by this section need not be completed before
37 placement, but shall be completed as soon as possible after placement;

1 (4) On reports of alleged child abuse and neglect, to investigate
2 agencies in accordance with chapter 26.44 RCW, including child day-care
3 centers and family day-care homes, to determine whether the alleged
4 abuse or neglect has occurred, and whether child protective services or
5 referral to a law enforcement agency is appropriate;

6 (5) To issue, revoke, or deny licenses to agencies pursuant to
7 chapter 74.15 RCW and RCW 74.13.031. Licenses shall specify the
8 category of care which an agency is authorized to render and the ages,
9 sex and number of persons to be served;

10 (6) To prescribe the procedures and the form and contents of
11 reports necessary for the administration of chapter 74.15 RCW and RCW
12 74.13.031 and to require regular reports from each licensee;

13 (7) To inspect agencies periodically to determine whether or not
14 there is compliance with chapter 74.15 RCW and RCW 74.13.031 and the
15 requirements adopted hereunder;

16 (8) To review requirements adopted hereunder at least every two
17 years and to adopt appropriate changes after consultation with ((~~the~~
18 ~~child care coordinating committee and other~~)) affected groups for child
19 day-care requirements and with the children's services advisory
20 committee for requirements for other agencies; and

21 (9) To consult with public and private agencies in order to help
22 them improve their methods and facilities for the care of children,
23 expectant mothers and developmentally disabled persons.

24 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 12.** If specific funding for the purposes of
25 this act, referencing this act by bill or chapter number, is not
26 provided by June 30, 2005, in the omnibus appropriations act, this act
27 is null and void.

28 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 13.** The following acts or parts of acts are
29 each repealed:

30 (1) RCW 74.13.090 (Child care coordinating committee) and 1995 c
31 399 s 204, 1993 c 194 s 7, 1989 c 381 s 3, & 1988 c 213 s 2; and

32 (2) RCW 74.13.0901 (Child care partnership) and 1989 c 381 s 4.

33 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 14.** Sections 1 through 6 of this act expire
34 July 1, 2007.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 15.** This act is necessary for the immediate
2 preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the
3 state government and its existing public institutions, and takes effect
4 immediately."

5 Correct the title.

EFFECT: Requires the Washington Early Learning Council (Council) to make recommendations to the Governor and the appropriate committees of the Legislature concerning statewide organization of early learning by November 15, 2005.

Requires the Council to also make recommendations to the Governor and the appropriate committees of the Legislature concerning the following:

(1) Identification of current populations being served and potential populations to be served by early learning programs and services;

(2) The state's role in supporting quality early learning programs and services;

(3) Appropriate levels and sources of stable and sustainable funding to meet statewide and local need for early learning programs and services, including public-private partnerships;

(4) Changes in existing early learning programs and services, including the administration of those programs and services, to improve their efficiency, effectiveness, and quality;

(5) Changes in existing early learning programs and services to ensure that the content is aligned with what children need to know and be able to do upon entering school;

(6) How to maximize available early learning resources to ensure children are receiving continuity of care; and

(7) Providing for smooth transitions from early learning programs and services to K-12 programs.

Requires the Council to make recommendations to the Governor and the appropriate committees of the Legislature concerning the regulation of child care, including child care that is exempt from regulation and unlicensed child care that is subject to regulation, in order to ensure the safety, health, quality, and accessibility of child care services throughout the state.

Provides that the Council is to serve as the Advisory Committee on Early Learning (Advisory Committee) to the Comprehensive Education Study Steering Committee (Steering Committee). The nongovernmental cochair of the Council is to serve as the chair of the Advisory Committee. The Council must have input on the recommendations developed by the Steering Committee.

Eliminates references to the length of terms to be served by members of the Council. Requires the Council to report regularly as appropriate, rather than annually, to the Governor and the appropriate committees of the Legislature on the progress, findings, and recommendations of the Council.

Eliminates the inclusion of "wage progression based on formal education" in the criterion of staff compensation within the identified criteria that the Council is required to take into consideration in developing the voluntary rating system.

Requires the Council to complete development of the voluntary rating system by December 1, 2006.

Requires the Council to submit the voluntary rating system to the Governor and the appropriate fiscal and policy committees of the Legislature by January 1, 2007. If no action is taken by the Legislature by the end of the 2007 regular legislative session, the Council may begin initial implementation of the voluntary rating system, subject to available funding.

Requires the Council to complete initial development of the tiered-reimbursement system by December 1, 2005, to be implemented in two pilot sites in different geographic regions of the state with demonstrated public-private partnerships, and complete development of the tiered-reimbursement system by December 1, 2006, to be implemented statewide.

Revises the definition of "early learning programs and services" to include child care, rather than the regulation of child care, and state, private, and nonprofit preschool programs, rather than the regulation of those programs.

Adds an emergency clause and provides that the sections of the bill relating to the Council expire July 1, 2007.

--- END ---