

HB 1152-S - DIGEST

(SUBSTITUTED FOR - SEE 2ND SUB)

Declares an intent to build on the efforts of communities across the state to improve the quality of early learning environments available to children and their families, as well as the information available to families relating to those early learning environments.

Recognizes that efforts to improve early learning must build upon existing partnerships between the public and private sectors. The experiences and resources of both public and private entities are essential to making meaningful and lasting improvements in the quality of early learning environments across the state. Statewide leadership is needed to guide and support the efforts of the private and public sectors working together to make systemwide improvements in the quality, affordability, and accessibility of early learning opportunities.

Declares an intent to establish an effective oversight body, composed of representation from the public and private sectors, to provide leadership and vision to strengthen the quality of early learning services and programs for all children and families in the state.

Establishes the Washington early learning council in the governor's office. The purpose of the council is to provide vision, leadership, and direction to the improvement, realignment, and expansion of early learning programs and services for children birth to five years of age in order to better meet the early learning needs of children and their families. The goal of the council is to build upon existing efforts and recommend new initiatives, as necessary, to create an adequately financed, high-quality, accessible, and comprehensive early learning system that benefits all young children whose parents choose it.

Requires the council to develop a voluntary, quality-based, graduated rating system consisting of levels of quality to be achieved by licensed child care providers serving children and families in the state. The purpose of the rating system is to provide families with vital information about the quality of early learning programs available to them and to increase the quality of early learning programs operating throughout the state. In developing the voluntary rating system, the council shall seek to build upon existing partnerships and initiate new partnerships between the public and private sectors.

Declares that implementation of the voluntary rating system shall initially consist of two pilot sites in different geographic regions of the state with demonstrated public-private partnerships to support implementation. In developing the voluntary rating system, the council shall make recommendations concerning both initial and subsequent statewide implementation of the rating system, including the following: (1) Potential implementing entities;

(2) Sources of funding for implementation;

(3) Necessary infrastructure for facilitating and supporting participation in the rating system, including assistance necessary

to help providers progress up the tiers; and

(4) Strategies for raising public awareness of the rating system.

Directs the council to complete initial development of the voluntary rating system by December 1, 2005, and begin initial implementation of the two pilot sites by March 30, 2006.

Directs the council to develop a tiered-reimbursement system that provides higher rates of reimbursement for state-subsidized child care for licensed child care providers that achieve one or more levels of quality above basic licensing requirements in accordance with the voluntary quality-based graduated rating system developed pursuant to this act.

Requires the council to complete development of the tiered-reimbursement system by December 1, 2005.

Repeals RCW 74.13.090 and 74.13.0901.