

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1905

As Reported by House Committee On:
Early Learning & Children's Services

Title: An act relating to early learning and child care programs grants.

Brief Description: Creating early learning and child care program grants.

Sponsors: Representatives Kagi, Conway, Seaquist, Anderson, Ormsby, Simpson, Williams, Rodne, Appleton, Kessler, P. Sullivan, Kenney, Hasegawa, Morrell, Wood and Santos.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Early Learning & Children's Services: 2/13/07, 2/16/07 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Directs the Department of Early Learning to provide grant funding, within amounts specifically appropriated, to maintain staff and services at selected early learning and child care centers on public college campuses.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Haler, Ranking Minority Member; Walsh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Appleton, Hinkle, Pettigrew and Roberts.

Staff: Sydney Forrester (786-7120).

Background:

A variety of early learning and child care programs are operated or managed by the state's two-year and four-year colleges. Some programs serve as lab schools for students participating in childhood development programs or courses. Other programs include a parent education component and may operate somewhat like a co-operative early learning center.

Most employees of campus-based early learning programs are public employees for purposes of collective bargaining. These early learning programs, however, were approved as self-sustaining programs for which the cost of operations must be funded by fees charged to

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parents and/or fees contributed by student body associations. In order to pay the increased wages that were bargained for employees of self-sustaining programs, some programs report they have reduced the hours employees work and/or reduced the number of slots available for children.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The Department of Early Learning is directed, within amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, to establish a program for providing grants to early learning programs operated or managed by public colleges. Grants may be used only to maintain staff and services at the selected programs.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute removes: (1) references to the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development; and (2) a \$5 million appropriation from the child care facility revolving fund.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill is a solution to a crisis in campus-based child care programs. These programs serve as lab schools for early childhood students and provide valuable Head Start and Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) programs for children. Some of these programs are models for the rest of the state. This crisis is arising because the campus-based programs are self-sustaining programs. When increased wages are bargained, additional state money does not flow to these programs, and instead the programs must collect money for increased wages from parent fees or other sources.

To generate the money for raises, some campus-based programs have had to open more slots in the programs to private paying families. Other programs report they have cut classified staff positions.

Self-supporting child care programs may receive a small amount of funding from student fees, but most programs are operating on the moneys charged to parents. We have a big problem paying for child care because of the effect of collective bargaining and the lack of fully funding the increased wages bargained. This bill is a short-term solution and we need to look for solutions to prevent further cutbacks. With help from the Department of Early Learning this will happen.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Kagi, prime sponsor; Karma Hugo, Whatcom Community College; Rosemary Sterling and Amber Lewis, Washington Federation of State Employees; and Agda Burchard, Washington Association for the Education of Young Children.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.