H-2447.1

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**HOUSE BILL 2300**

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**State of Washington 68th Legislature 2024 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Dent, Reeves, Eslick, and Jacobsen

AN ACT Relating to child care provider qualifications; amending RCW 43.216.755; and creating a new section.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The COVID-19 pandemic had a dramatic impact on all people, but had a particularly dramatic impact on child care and the child care industry. Many child care facilities closed during the COVID-19 pandemic and providers left the child care field. It became clear during the COVID-19 pandemic how critical child care is to the success of every industry as parents need child care to work.

The legislature finds that because of the unprecedented impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the child care industry, the plans of many child care providers to receive education were put on hold as efforts were focused on addressing the immediate needs of child care providers and families. For those reasons, the legislature finds that it is necessary to delay the requirement for child care providers to meet certification and training qualification conditions.

To recognize the professionalism and experience of individuals currently in the child care field, the legislature finds that a work equivalency option should be added as an alternative to certification requirements for all child care positions. This work equivalency alternative should take into account the years of service child care providers have committed to educating children, while allowing for upward mobility within the field. Without this alternative, there is an education cliff that discourages child care professionals to remain in the field.

**Sec.**  RCW 43.216.755 and 2020 c 342 s 2 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) By July 1, ((~~2021~~)) 2024, the department shall implement all components of a noncredit-bearing, community-based training pathway for licensed child care providers to meet professional education requirements associated with child care licensure. The community-based training pathway must be offered as an alternative to existing credit-bearing pathways available to providers.

(2) The department shall consult with the following stakeholders in the development and implementation of the community-based training pathway: The statewide child care resource and referral network, a community-based training organization that provides training to licensed family day care providers, a statewide organization that represents the interests of family day care providers, a statewide organization that represents the interests of licensed child day care centers, an organization that represents the interests of refugee and immigrant communities, a bilingual child care provider whose first language is not English, an organization that advocates for early learning, an organization representing private and independent schools, and the state board for community and technical colleges.

(3) The community-based training pathway must:

(a) Align with adopted core competencies for early learning professionals;

(b) Be made available to providers in multiple languages;

(c) Include culturally relevant practices; ((~~and~~))

(d) Be made available at low cost to providers and at prices comparable to the cost of similar community-based trainings, not to exceed ((~~two hundred and fifty dollars~~)) $250 per person; ((~~and~~))

(e) Be accessible to providers in rural and urban settings; and

(f) Be made available in an online format.

(4) The department shall allow licensed child care providers until at least August 1, ((~~2026,~~)) 2033, or until at least seven years following the completion of the department implementing all components of the noncredit-bearing, community-based training pathway described in subsection (1) of this section, whichever is later, to:

(a) Comply with child care licensing rules that require a provider to hold an early childhood education initial certificate ((~~or~~)), an early childhood education short certificate, or an early childhood education state certificate; ((~~or~~))

(b) Complete community-based trainings; or

(c) Demonstrate to the department work experience-based competency after having worked in a licensed child care setting for:

(i) A minimum of four years for a person entering work in a licensed child care setting as a center program supervisor, center assistant director, or center director position; or

(ii) A minimum of two years after entering work in a licensed child care setting for all other positions except those described in (c)(i) of this subsection. A person who meets the two-year work experience-based competency exemption under this subsection (4)(c)(ii) will continue to meet the work experience-based competency exemption if the person moves into a center program supervisor, center assistant director, or center director position.

(5) The department may not require licensed child care providers to complete annual in-service training requirements in order to demonstrate work experience-based competency described under subsection (4)(c) of this section.

(6) After August 1, 2033, the department must allow all child care providers who are hired for the first time into a role requiring an early childhood education initial, short, or state certification a minimum of seven years from the person's date of hire into the role requiring such certification to meet the requirements of subsection (4) of this section.

((~~(5)~~)) (7) For the purposes of this section, "demonstrated competence" means an individual has shown that he or she has the skills to complete the required work independently.

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