

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2111

As Passed Legislature

Title: An act relating to clarifying requirements for subsidized child care.

Brief Description: Clarifying requirements for subsidized child care.

Sponsors: Representatives Nance, Senn, Simmons, Callan, Tharinger, Lekanoff, Wylie and Reeves.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Human Services, Youth, & Early Learning: 1/9/24, 1/12/24 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 1/29/24, 96-0.

Passed Senate: 2/22/24, 48-0.

Passed Legislature.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Reorganizes existing statutory language pertaining to the Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) program, and references WCCC eligibility requirements established in Department of Children, Youth, and Families rules.
- Removes dates indicating deadlines that are in the past and no longer applicable as well as other outdated references, and makes other minor wording changes.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, YOUTH, & EARLY LEARNING

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Senn, Chair; Cortes, Vice Chair; Rule, Vice Chair; Eslick, Ranking Minority Member; Couture, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Callan, Dent, Goodman, Ortiz-Self, Taylor and Walsh.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Staff: Omeara Harrington (786-7136).

Background:

Working Connections Child Care.

Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) is a federally and state-funded program administered by the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) that provides subsidies for child care while a parent is working or participating in approved work-related activities. The WCCC program is available to families who meet certain eligibility and household income requirements.

Eligibility for WCCC.

Eligibility requirements for WCCC are found in both statute and DCYF rules.

In general, to qualify for the WCCC program, a family must have a household income at or below 60 percent of the state median income (SMI), adjusted for family size. Beginning July 1, 2025, a family is eligible for the WCCC program benefits when the household's annual income is above 60 percent and at or below 75 percent of the SMI, adjusted for family size, and beginning July 1, 2027, if funds are appropriated, when the household's annual income is up to 85 percent of the SMI, adjusted for family size. Depending on income, families may be required to pay a monthly copayment to their provider.

Examples of other eligibility requirements include that the child is age-eligible, that the parent and child reside in Washington, that the parent has parental control of the child, and that the parent does not have assets exceeding a certain threshold. Additionally, to be eligible for WCCC benefits, the parent must be engaged in an approved activity as defined in agency rules. Approved activities include employment, self-employment, certain educational and training programs, and other identified activities.

The DCYF may not consider the immigration status of an applicant or consumer's child when determining eligibility for WCCC benefits.

Exceptions and Special Eligibility Rules.

Approved Activities.

The DCYF may not require an applicant or consumer to meet work requirements as a condition of receiving the WCCC program benefits when the recipient is enrolled in a state registered apprenticeship or is a full-time student of a community, technical, or tribal college, and is enrolled in certain programs. Subject to appropriations, the DCYF may waive work requirements for full-time students who are enrolled in a bachelor's degree or applied baccalaureate degree program.

Categorical Eligibility.

The DCYF is required to maintain policies to allow WCCC eligibility for families in these categories:

- families who in the last six months have received certain child welfare services; and
- families that include a parent or guardian who, in the last six months, was a participant in a specialty or therapeutic court or who was a listed victim in a case before a specialty or therapeutic court, and have been referred for child care as part of the court's proceedings.

Families meeting these criteria are not required to meet most other eligibility requirements or pay a copay to the provider.

Expanded Eligibility.

There are several categories of expanded eligibility for the WCCC. These categories include:

- employees of licensed child care centers or family home providers with a household income at or below 85 percent of the SMI level;
- persons in their first 12 months of a state registered apprenticeship when the person has a household income that does not exceed 75 percent of the SMI at the time of application, or, beginning July 1, 2027, does not exceed 85 percent of the SMI at the time of application if funds are appropriated to increase the generally applicable income eligibility threshold for the WCCC program to 85 percent of the SMI; and
- parents who are high school students or are 21 years old or younger and working toward completing a high school equivalency certificate, and whose household income does not exceed 85 percent of the SMI.

Persons in these categories must otherwise meet program eligibility requirements in order to qualify for the WCCC program. Copays are waived in some, but not all circumstances.

Summary of Bill:

Existing statutory provisions governing the WCCC program are categorized and put into the following structure, and reorganized into a subchapter with the heading of "subsidized child care":

- general policies;
- general eligibility requirements;
- copayments;
- exceptions to approved activity requirements;
- categorical eligibility categories; and
- expanded eligibility categories.

References to supplementary DCYF eligibility rules are included where relevant.

In addition, dates indicating deadlines that are in the past and no longer applicable are removed, as are other outdated references. A provision assigning a report that was due in 2011 is repealed. A reference to "immigration" status of an applicant or consumer's child is changed to "citizenship" status.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) In every corner of the state people are struggling with the cost of living, and child care is a very significant issue. This bill helps clarify key provisions that help low- and moderate-income people access child care. While this bill is technical, it is important to stop and recognize the gains that have been made in this system, particularly around copays, and the work that remains on workforce issues.

This bill puts student parents on the map and makes them feel seen. At this point, tuition costs less than child care, and many students struggle to pay for child care and tuition at the same time. There are key eligibility provisions in this bill that allow more access to child care for students.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Greg Nance, prime sponsor; Erica Hallock, Start Early Washington; Mirian Mencias; and Collin Bannister, The Washington Student Association .

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.