

SENATE BILL REPORT

E2SHB 1545

As of March 27, 2003

Title: An act relating to consolidation of early learning and child care programs and services in the state.

Brief Description: Providing for coordination of early learning and child care programs.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Fromhold, Hinkle, Kagi, Kenney, Schual-Berke, Upthegrove, Chase, Cox, McDermott, Delvin, Cooper, Dickerson, Pettigrew, Hankins, Lantz, Quall, Conway, Rockefeller and Clements).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Education: 4/1/03.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Staff: Heather Lewis-Lechner (786-7448)

Background: In 2000, the Legislature directed the Office of Financial Management (OFM) to conduct a study of the best method for coordinating and consolidating child care and early education programs funded by the state. The Child Care and Early Learning Organizational Study, which OFM produced in response, provided the following recommendations:

- adopt an umbrella mission statement that captures all child care and early learning programs;
- combine programs with similar or duplicate functions and missions;
- streamline the current configuration by reducing the number of state agencies involved in the child care licensing process;
- assign an interagency task force to examine and reduce the differences in program service standards; and
- coordinate training for providers regarding state agency rules by all programs.

In response to this report, the Governor's Office undertook administrative action to consolidate child care and early learning programs in the state, the primary component of which was the creation of the Division of Child Care and Early Learning within the Economic Services Administration in the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS).

Currently, child care and early learning programs in the state are administered through three state agencies: DSHS, the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development, and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).

Summary of Bill: The Governor and OSPI must coordinate the administration of early learning and child care programs and services in the state. "Early learning and child care programs and services" is defined in the bill and limited to the listed functions and entities.

An Early Learning and Child Care Task Force, under the joint authority of the Governor and OSPI, is established within OSPI to oversee the coordination of early learning and child care programs and services in the state. The task force must consist of 17 members who meet certain listed requirements and are appointed or recommended by the Child Care Coordinating Committee, the Governor, OSPI and the Legislature as set out in the bill.

The task force must develop a plan for coordination of the early learning and child care programs and services, which must include planning for consolidation of those programs and services, as appropriate. The task force must present the plan to the Governor and OSPI by December 15, 2003. By January 1, 2004, the Governor and OSPI must report this plan to the Legislature.

The Governor and OSPI, in consultation with the task force, must carry out the following duties:

- (a) creation of consistent aligned early learning goals for children younger than school age that address the multiple developmental aspects of young children and that are aligned with K-12 standards;
- (b) creation of consistent alignment among different program standards for early learning programs and services;
- (c) design of an integrated system of staffing and professional development for early learning and child care programs and services;
- (d) identification of comprehensive, family-focused services to be provided by early learning and child care programs for children and families who need more intensive support;
- (e) design of a plan to address barriers to the provision of early learning and child care services; and
- (f) development of recommendations to improve collaboration and integration between the early learning and child care system and the K-12 and higher education system.

By January 1, 2004, the Governor and OSPI, in consultation with the task force, must develop a plan for implementation of these duties and report that plan to the Legislature. A report on the implementation of part (a) above is submitted to the Legislature by September 1, 2004, by the Governor and OSPI. A report on implementation of parts (b) through (e) is submitted to the Legislature by September 1, 2005. To the extent possible and within available funds, the entire plan must be implemented by January 1, 2005.

The task force expires on October 1, 2005.

If specific funding for the purposes of this act is not provided by June 30, 2003, this act is null and void.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.