

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 6266

As Passed Senate, February 11, 2004

Title: An act relating to kindergarten.

Brief Description: Excluding kindergartens from the definition of child care agency.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Children & Family Services & Corrections (originally sponsored by Senators B. Sheldon, McAuliffe, Shin, Berkey, Fairley, Kline, Kohl-Welles, Thibaudeau, Eide, Keiser, Spanel, Franklin and Jacobsen).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Children & Family Services & Corrections: 1/20/04, 2/3/04 [DPS].
Passed Senate: 2/11/04, 49-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6266 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Stevens, Chair; Carlson, Deccio, Hargrove, McAuliffe and Regala.

Staff: Edith Rice (786-7444)

Background: Current law requires that agencies which care for children outside of their homes be licensed by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). This ensures that adequate minimum health and safety standards are established for service providers. Educational nursery schools and kindergartens serving children less than four hours a day are not included in the definition of agency and are not subject to the licensing requirements under this chapter.

Summary of Bill: The law is further clarified that educational kindergartens which serve children, who are five years old, for less than seven hours per day are not subject to the licensing requirements under this chapter.

Kindergartens seeking to operate up to seven hours per day must certify to DSHS that employees have submitted to a background check. Kindergartens must also comply with building, fire and health code requirements.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 19, 2004.

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

Testimony For: Kindergartens such as these are educational in nature and should not be considered a child care agency, nor subject to the licensing requirements for child care agencies.

Testimony Against: No provisions are made for oversight of these kindergartens, nor is compliance with reasonable safety regulations required.

Testified: Patricia Christensen, Montessori Country School (pro); Jennifer MacDonald, parent (pro); Rachel Langen, Director Division of Child Care and Early Learning, DSHS (concerns).