

FINAL BILL REPORT

E2SHB 1152

C 490 L 05

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Creating a Washington early learning council.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Kagi, Fromhold, Jarrett, Schual-Berke, Walsh, Quall, B. Sullivan, Grant, Ormsby, Kessler, Simpson, Moeller, Lovick, Roberts, Chase, Williams, P. Sullivan, Tom, Morrell, McIntire, Kenney, Haigh, McDermott, Dickerson, Santos and Linville).

House Committee on Children & Family Services

House Committee on Appropriations

Senate Committee on Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education

Senate Committee on Ways & Means

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 the 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 Office of the Governor 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 (DCCEL) within the Economic Services Administration in the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS).

Child care and early learning programs in the state are administered through three state agencies: the DSHS, the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED), and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). The DCCEL within the DSHS licenses child care homes and centers, develops policy and procedures for the state's child care subsidy program, and directs the Head Start-State Collaboration Project. The CTED administers the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), which is the state's preschool program. The OSPI administers services and programs relating to child care and early learning including family literacy programs, special education for children 3 years of age and older, and the nutrition assistance program for child care. Training and professional development programs for early learning professionals are available through

such sources as the State Training and Registry System and the state's higher education institutions.

The Child Care Coordinating Committee was established in state law in order to provide coordination and communication among state agencies responsible for child care and early childhood education services, serve as an advisory coordinator for all state agencies responsible for early childhood or child care programs, and annually review state programs and make recommendations to state agencies and the Legislature to maximize funding and promote furtherance of the state's child care services policy.

Summary:

The Washington Early Learning Council (Council) is established in the Office of the Governor for the purpose of providing vision, leadership, and direction to the improvement, realignment, and expansion of early learning programs and services for children birth to 5 years of age in order to better meet the early learning needs of children and their families. "Early learning programs and services" are defined to include the following: child care; state, private, and nonprofit preschool programs; child care subsidy programs; and training and professional development programs for early learning professionals. The goal of the Council is to build upon existing efforts and recommend new initiatives, as necessary, to create an adequately financed high-quality, accessible, and comprehensive early learning system that benefits all young children whose parents choose it.

Early Learning Plan

The Council is required to develop an early learning plan to improve the organization of early learning programs and services at the state level, and to improve the accessibility and quality of early learning programs and services throughout the state.

By November 15, 2005, the Council is required to make recommendations to the Governor and the appropriate committees of the Legislature concerning statewide organization of early learning.

The Council is also required to make recommendations to the Governor and the appropriate committees of the Legislature concerning the following:

- identification of current populations being served and potential populations to be served by early learning programs and services;
- the state's role in supporting quality early learning programs and services;
- appropriate levels and sources of stable and sustainable funding to meet statewide and local need for early learning programs and services, including public-private partnerships;
- changes in existing early learning programs and services, including the administration of those programs and services, to improve their efficiency, effectiveness, and quality;
- changes in existing early learning programs and services to ensure that the content is aligned with what children need to know and be able to do upon entering school;
- how to maximize available early learning resources to ensure children are receiving continuity of care; and

- providing for smooth transitions from early learning programs and services to K-12 programs.

As provided in the act, the Council is required to focus on quality improvements to licensed child care through the following mechanisms:

- voluntary, quality-based, graduated rating system to provide information to parents on the quality of child care programs and to provide resources and incentives for quality improvements; and
- tiered-reimbursement system for state-subsidized child care to improve the quality of care for children participating in state-funded care.

The Council is required to make recommendations to the Governor and the appropriate committees of the Legislature concerning the regulation of child care, including child care that is exempt from regulation and unlicensed child care that is subject to regulation, in order to ensure the safety, health, quality, and accessibility of child care services throughout the state.

The Council serves as the Advisory Committee on Early Learning (Advisory Committee) to the Comprehensive Education Study Steering Committee (Steering Committee), created in Engrossed Second Substitute Senate Bill No. 5441 of 2005, and the nongovernmental co-chair of the Council serves as the chair of the Advisory Committee. The Council must have input on the recommendations developed by the Steering Committee.

The Council must make use of existing reports, research, planning efforts, and programs, including, but not limited to, the following: the federal Early Head Start program, the federal Head Start program, the state Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), the state's Essential Academic Learning Requirements and K-3 Grade Level Expectations, the Washington State Early Learning and Development Benchmarks, existing tiered-reimbursement initiatives, the state's Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Plan, and the work of the Child Care Coordinating Committee.

Quality Rating System

The Council is required to develop a voluntary, quality-based, graduated rating system consisting of levels of quality to be achieved by licensed child care providers. In developing the voluntary rating system, the Council must seek to build upon existing partnerships and initiate new partnerships between the public and private sectors.

In developing the voluntary rating system, the Council must establish a system of tiers as the basis for the rating system's levels of quality. In developing the system of tiers, the Council must take into consideration the following quality criteria:

- child-to-staff ratios;
- group size;
- learning environment;
- curriculum;
- parent and family involvement and support;
- staff qualifications and training;

- staff professional development;
- staff compensation, including wage progression based on formal education;
- staff stability;
- accreditation;
- program evaluation; and
- program administrative policies and procedures.

In developing the voluntary rating system, the Council is also required to establish quality assurance measures as well as a mechanism for system evaluation.

In developing the voluntary rating system, the Council is required to make recommendations concerning both initial and subsequent statewide implementation of the rating system, including the following:

- potential implementing entities;
- sources of funding for implementation;
- necessary infrastructure for facilitating and supporting participation in the rating system, including assistance necessary to help providers progress up the tiers; and
- strategies for raising public awareness of the rating system.

The Council is required to complete initial development of the voluntary rating system by December 1, 2005, and complete development by December 1, 2006. The Council is required to submit the voluntary rating system to the Governor and the appropriate fiscal and policy committees of the Legislature by January 1, 2007. If no action is taken by the Legislature by the end of the 2007 regular legislative session, the Council may begin initial implementation of the voluntary rating system, subject to available funding.

Tiered-Reimbursement System

The Council is required to develop a tiered-reimbursement system that provides higher rates of reimbursement for state-subsidized child care for licensed child care providers that achieve one or more levels of quality above basic licensing requirements in accordance with the voluntary quality-based graduated rating system developed by the Council.

In developing the tiered-reimbursement system, the Council must review existing tiered-reimbursement initiatives in the state and integrate those initiatives into the tiered-reimbursement system.

The Council is required to complete initial development of the tiered-reimbursement system by December 1, 2005, to be implemented in two pilot sites in different geographic regions of the state with demonstrated public-private partnerships. The Council is required to complete development of the tiered-reimbursement system by December 1, 2006, to be implemented statewide, subject to the availability of amounts appropriated by the Legislature for this specific purpose.

Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the DSHS is required to implement the tiered-reimbursement system developed by the Council.

Implementation of the tiered-reimbursement system is to initially consist of two pilot sites in

different geographic regions of the state with demonstrated public-private partnerships, with statewide implementation to follow.

In implementing the tiered-reimbursement system, consideration must be given to child care providers who provide staff wage progression.

The DSHS is required to begin implementation of the two pilot sites by March 30, 2006.

Membership of the Washington Early Learning Council

The Council must include representation from public, nonprofit, and for-profit entities, and its membership must reflect regional, racial, and cultural diversity to ensure representation of the needs of all children and families in the state. The Council is to consist of 17 members, as follows:

- one representative each of the Office of the Governor, the DSHS, the Department of Health, and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, appointed by the Governor;
- one representative of the OSPI, appointed by the Superintendent of Public Instruction;
- two representatives of private business and two representatives of philanthropy, appointed by the Governor;
- four individuals who have demonstrated leadership and engagement in the field of early learning, appointed by the Governor; and
- two members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, one of whom must be a member of the majority caucus and one of whom must be a member of the minority caucus, and two members of the Senate appointed by the President of the Senate, one of whom must be a member of the majority caucus and one of whom must be a member of the minority caucus.

The Council is to be co-chaired by the representative of the Office of the Governor and a non-governmental member designated by the Governor.

Members of the Council must be compensated and reimbursed for travel expenses in accordance with state law.

The Governor may employ an executive director, who is exempt from the provisions of the state Civil Service law, and such other staff as is necessary to carry out the purposes of this chapter. The Governor is to fix the salary of the executive director in accordance with state law.

The Council is required to monitor and measure its progress and regularly report, as appropriate, to the Governor and the appropriate committees of the Legislature on the progress, findings, and recommendations of the Council.

The Council is required to establish one or more technical advisory committees, as needed. Membership of such advisory committees may include the following: representatives of any state agency the Council deems appropriate, including the Higher Education Coordinating Board and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; family home child care

providers, child care center providers, and college or university child care providers; parents; early childhood development experts; representatives of school districts and teachers involved in the provision of child care and preschool programs; representatives of Resource and Referral programs; parent education specialists; pediatric or other health professionals; representatives of citizen groups concerned with child care and early learning; representatives of labor organizations; representatives of private business; and representatives of Head Start and ECEAP agencies.

Child Care Coordinating Committee

The Child Care Coordinating Committee is eliminated.

Other Provisions

The provisions of the act relating to the Council expire July 1, 2007.

The act is null and void unless funded in the state operating budget.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	68	28	
Senate	30	16	(Senate amended)
House	77	21	(House concurred)

Effective: May 16, 2005