

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 3168

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Early Learning & Children's Services

**Title:** An act relating to the creation of the Washington head start program.

**Brief Description:** Regarding the creation of the Washington head start program.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Goodman, Kagi, Walsh, Haler, Roberts, Pettigrew, Hinkle, Sullivan, Kessler, Green, Hudgins, Darneille, McIntire, Lias, Kelley, Kenney, Hankins, Nelson, Santos and Ormsby.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Early Learning & Children's Services: 1/29/08, 1/31/08 [DPS].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Directs the Department of Early Learning to develop a plan to implement a statewide Washington Head Start Program.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Roberts, Vice Chair; Haler, Ranking Minority Member; Walsh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Goodman, Hinkle and Pettigrew.

**Staff:** Brian Considine (786-7290).

**Background:**

In 2006 the Legislature created the Department of Early Learning (DEL) as an executive branch agency. The primary duties of the DEL are to implement early learning policy and to coordinate, consolidate, and integrate child care and early learning programs in order to administer programs and funds effectively.

Washington offers two free early learning programs to preschoolers – Head Start and the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP). Head Start is a federally-funded

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program serving about 18,000 children ages 3 to 5 years from low-income families. Funding for Head Start is 80 percent federal with a 20 percent local match. The ECEAP is a state-funded preschool program serving about 6,000 children per year. Public or private organizations receive direct funding from the state through a grant process and may then contract with organizations to offer services. The ECEAP-funded programs are offered in settings such as public schools, child care centers, community organizations, and Head Start agencies.

The ECEAP serves primarily 4-year-olds. Three-year-olds may be served after all eligible 4-year-old applicants have been enrolled. Eligible families for the ECEAP are those at or below 110 percent of the federal poverty level, although up to 10 percent of program slots may be offered to over-income families with developmental or environmental risk factors. Space is also reserved to meet the needs of preschool children of migrant workers or Native Americans.

The ECEAP is composed of four interactive components: education, health and nutrition, parent involvement, and family support. It is a community-based, family-focused, comprehensive, pre-kindergarten program designed to help children and families who are in poverty. The program focuses on helping 3- and 4-year-olds prepare for and succeed in school while helping their parents progress toward self-sufficiency.

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#### **Summary of Substitute Bill:**

The Legislature finds that the ECEAP has served an important role, but its performance standards should be aligned with the Federal Head Start Program. The DEL must develop a plan to implement a statewide Washington Head Start Program. In doing so, the DEL will identify:

- federal Head Start guidelines, performance standards and measures;
- additional resources needed to meet federal guidelines and standards;
- changes to Washington ECEAP statutes necessary to implement a Washington Head Start Program; and
- current programs in Washington offering full-day, year-round children's services.

The DEL will submit a report to the Governor and Legislature by December 1, 2008, with recommendations for implementing a state-supported pilot program modeled on the Federal Head Start Program.

#### **Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

The substitute bill makes some clarifying changes to the intent language in the original bill.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support of original bill) This bill is a flagship piece of legislation. This legislation is the right first step to take to bring stakeholders together to decide how to best implement a Washington Head Start Program. The ECEAP has fallen behind the Federal Head Start Program in hours with children, qualifications for staff, and services for families. There is a need for more resources and more intensive services for people under the state program. Also, there is a potential for matching funds from the federal program. The programs are similar and there is only a historic and bureaucratic difference. Washington is at the bottom in the country of meeting Head Start service hours per year, and this would require the state to increase those hours to meet Head Start standards. This isn't about throwing money at a problem, it is about creating transparency in the state program because not many parents know what the ECEAP is or does, but everyone knows Head Start and Head Start is a proven program. This bill is meant to align all standards and requirements of the ECEAP with the Federal Head Start Program, but the administration of the two programs would still be separate. There will be no new management for providers, and there isn't a secret agenda. Many programs and organizations support this, and doing this is about streamlining and increasing resources to the state program. This bill is the first step and it creates a process to bring people together to talk about process of aligning the Washington Head Start Program with the Federal Head Start Program.

There are minimum sizes for Head Start programs to make sure the program is not paying too much per child. Intensive monitoring is good because it leads to greater accountability. There is a need for services for children ages 0 to 3, and a pilot program allows the state to test different models to see what works best. Also, Head Start can assist parents with a child who has a developmental disability. If parents did not have this, then the child would not have a chance to be productive in the future.

Law enforcement agencies support this bill because statistics show that you can prevent crime by investing in kids, and this provides more money to evidence-based home visit programs. The Washington State Institute for Public Policy reports that evidence-based educational programs will reduce the crime rate. If you put the money in now, it will save the system money in the long run. Now is the time for a Washington Head Start Program that will provide better services to children and families, and the goal is to have it implemented by 2010.

Oregon proposed a state pre-kindergarten program that is a replica of the Federal Head Start Program in 1987. In 1991 Oregon formed a partnership with the Regional Federal Head Start Bureau to create a seamless, collaborative, non-duplicative, and cost-effective system for administration of jointly funded grantees. The agreement is updated every biennium. There are many benefits to this agreement, two being: reduction of duplicate paperwork, and both programs jointly plan for expansion or reduction of funding and services. Funding responsibilities do not change, but federal and state funding is blended at the local level to

serve the greatest number of children possible. Oregon does have a few programs that are only funded with state money, but those programs are mostly rural programs that have found creative ways to still meet the requirement under the program. Local programs have a great deal of flexibility in choosing the program model that best meets the needs of the children and families they serve, and Oregon has not had any problems from the federal program in allowing flexibility at the local level.

(Neutral) The DEL is neutral, but it is interested in the concept. This is not in the governor's budget. The fiscal note is high because the DEL would have to contract out the work to develop a plan. It does not have the in-house staff with the necessary qualifications to develop a plan.

(With concerns on original bill) The Tulalip Tribes have concerns with the direction of this bill if it is done without a tribal consult. There are worries about the fiscal impact on the tribes, and the staffing qualifications under Head Start. Also, this may be another level of bureaucracy and they request consultation and research be done with this bill required under federal law. They would like to participate in the process.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support of original bill) Abby Ajaero; Janet Anderson and Joel Ryan, Washington State Association of Head Start/Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program; John Baucroft, Educare/Puget Sound Education District Head Start Program; Dell Ford, Oregon Head Start Collaboration Office; Sheriff Casey Salisbury, Mason County; Rudy Taylor, Kitsap County Community Resource Board; and Laura Wells, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Washington.

(Neutral) Sonali Patel, Department of Early Learning.

(With concerns on original bill) Suzi Wright, Tulalip Tribes.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.