

HOUSE BILL REPORT

E2SSB 5828

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

Title: An act relating to early child development and learning.

Brief Description: Regarding early child development and learning.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Kauffman, McAuliffe, Tom, Rasmussen, Eide, Oemig, Clements, Hobbs, Weinstein, Rockefeller, Kline and Kohl-Welles).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Early Learning & Children's Services: 3/20/07, 3/23/07 [DPA].

Brief Summary of Engrossed Second Substitute Bill (As Amended by House Committee)

- Establishes an Early Learning Advisory Council.
- Directs the Department of Early Learning (DEL) to implement a voluntary quality rating and improvement system for licensed child care centers and homes and early education programs.
- Outlines the private-public responsibilities between the DEL and Thrive By Five Washington.
- Makes available timely inspection and licensing information for parents.
- Directs the DEL to review and revise child care provider rules.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Haler, Ranking Minority Member; Walsh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Appleton, Hinkle, Pettigrew and Roberts.

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

Staff: Chris Alejano (786-7115).

Background:

The 2005 Legislature created a comprehensive education study to include examination of early learning, K-12 education, and higher education. The study effort, chaired by Governor Gregoire, became known as Washington Learns. Washington Learns issued an interim report in November 2005 and final recommendations in November 2006 for consideration by the Legislature.

The Washington Learns recommendations identify a number of strategies intended to create a "world-class, learner-focused, seamless education system for Washington." The strategies are organized around five major initiatives:

- (1) Early Learning: A Smart Investment;
- (2) Math and Science: A Competitive Edge;
- (3) Personalized Learning: Helping Every Student Succeed;
- (4) College and Workforce Training: Increasing Opportunities; and
- (5) Quality and Accountability: Keeping the Promise.

The final report also recommends additional work on accountability and education finance, along with development of a 10-year implementation strategy.

The Governor recommends implementation of many of the recommendations of Washington Learns through her proposed budget for the 2007-09 biennium and proposed omnibus legislation.

Summary of Amended Bill:

Early Learning Advisory Council. A 25-member Early Learning Advisory Council (Council) is established to advise the Department of Early Learning (DEL) on statewide early learning community needs and progress. The council is also directed to work with the DEL to develop a statewide early learning plan. Council representation criteria and term limits are outlined.

Voluntary Quality Rating and Improvement System. The DEL, in collaboration with community statewide partners, is directed to implement a voluntary quality rating and improvement system for licensed or certified child care centers and early education programs to: (1) give parents clear and easily accessible information about the quality of child care and early education programs; (2) support improvement in early learning programs; (3) increase the readiness of children for school; and (4) close the disparity in access to quality care. The DEL will report to the appropriate policy and fiscal committees prior to implementing the voluntary quality rating and improvement system.

Information. Upon developing an early learning information system, the DEL will make available to parents timely inspection and licensing action information through the internet and other means.

Private-Public Partnerships. The private-public partnership responsibilities between the DEL and Thrive By Five Washington are outlined. The partnership's duties include: (1) enhancing parent education and support; (2) working with and complementing existing early learning programs; (3) accepting and spending funds for quality initiatives; (4) encouraging local partnership efforts; (5) assisting the statewide movement to high quality early learning; and (6) supporting parents as a child's first and best teacher.

Nongovernmental private-public partnership is defined as an entity registered as a nonprofit corporation in Washington with a primary focus on early learning, school readiness, and parental support, and an ability to raise a minimum of \$5 million in contributions.

Rules Review. The DEL shall review and revise child care provider rules to: (1) encourage mutual respect among parents, providers, and state staff who enforce rules; (2) clearly focus on children's safety; and (3) improve early learning outcomes for children.

Amended Bill Compared to Engrossed Second Substitute Bill:

The amended bill includes school readiness and parental support as primary purposes of the nonprofit corporation in Washington in the definition of nongovernmental private-public partnership, and clarifies that the private-public partnership referenced in this act is the nongovernmental private-public partnership. The amended bill also removes the term "five-star" in places referencing the voluntary rating and improvement system, adds the term "quality" in places referencing the voluntary rating and improvement system, and clarifies that the purpose of the voluntary quality rating and improvement system is to give parents clear and accessible information about the quality of child care and early education programs, and support the improvement in early learning programs throughout the state. In addition, the amended bill changes the language related to the legislative committees that the DEL will report to before implementing the voluntary quality rating and improvement system from the education and fiscal committees to the appropriate policy and fiscal committees. The amended bill rewords one of the duties of the DEL related to improving parent information resources to read "to make early learning and resources available to parents and care givers," and clarifies one of the activities of the DEL to include providing clear and easily accessible information about quality.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The bill provides an emphasis and priority on early learning so that we can give our children the necessary education and opportunity to help them be successful in school. This bill adds a representative to the Early Learning Advisory Council from the Washington

Federation of Independent Schools. It also requires a report to the Legislature before implementing the quality rating system.

The law enforcement community supports investments in early learning in order to prevent future crimes from occurring, including domestic violence and child abuse.

The quality rating systems are really strong moves to support child care and provides small steps towards improvement. The Early Learning Advisory Council provides continued oversight of the state's early learning efforts. The bill should be very specific when talking about child care homes, centers, licensed family homes, or family, friends, and neighbor care because the language might exclude certain providers. The parent information piece is really important because parents need resources and information. The rules review is important for parents to be able to clearly communicate to parents what child care providers are supposed to be doing.

The bill promotes accountability in a very strong way and recognizes quality, partnership, and inclusion. Quality improvement is absolutely critical for the children in the state and for supporting the providers and parents.

Recruiting, retaining, and hiring high-quality staff are barriers to reaching the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation.

The technical assistance and support envisioned in this bill will help child care centers and family providers to achieve accreditation. It is critical to raise the child care subsidy rate in order to serve more low-income families.

Pediatricians across the state support early learning efforts and believe if we provide parents with information and support it will improve outcomes for children. The quality rating system will help to provide information to parents about choosing quality child care providers for their child.

(In support with concerns) The five-star quality and rating system does not allow some providers to participate in the program. Investing in the workforce to stabilize the early learning industry should be the first step with the career and wage ladder.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Senator Kauffman, prime sponsor; Laura Wells, Fight Crime: Invest in Youth; Chief Sam Granato, City of Yakima, Police Department; Sue Winn and Donna Horne, Washington State Family and Child Care Association, and Service Employees International Union; Amy Bloomfield, Squaxin Child Development Center; Jone Bosworth, Department of Early Learning; Cathy Garland, Children's Home Society of Washington; and Dr. Jill Sells, Docs for Tots.

(In support with concerns) Candi Doran, American Federation of Teachers and The Child Care Workforce Alliance of Washington.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.