

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 2716

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Early Learning & Human Services

**Title:** An act relating to working connections child care eligibility for vulnerable children.

**Brief Description:** Concerning working connections child care eligibility for vulnerable children.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Senn, Walsh, Kagi, Walkinshaw, McCabe, Ortiz-Self, Bergquist, Stanford, Gregerson, Ormsby and Goodman.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Early Learning & Human Services: 1/26/16, 1/27/16 [DPS].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Directs the Department of Early Learning to adopt rules that would allow children to be eligible for Working Connections Child Care under the vulnerable child eligibility category if they have received either Child Protective Services child care or Child Welfare Services child care within the prior six months and the case has been closed by the Department of Social and Health Services.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & HUMAN SERVICES

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Senn, Vice Chair; Walsh, Ranking Minority Member; Dent, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Hawkins, Kilduff, McCaslin, Ortiz-Self, Sawyer, Scott and Walkinshaw.

**Staff:** Ashley Paintner (786-7120).

**Background:**

Working Connections Child Care.

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*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.*

The Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) program offers subsidies to child care providers serving families at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. The state pays a portion of the cost of child care. The parents or caregivers are responsible for making a copayment to the child care provider. The Department of Early Learning (DEL) sets child care subsidy policy and provides the WCCC program oversight for child care licensing. The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) helps families apply for WCCC, determines eligibility and parent or caregiver copayments, authorizes child care, and issues payment to providers. Beginning July 1, 2016, authorizations for the WCCC program must be effective for a 12-month enrollment period, and the child may not be deemed ineligible due to a change in circumstance.

Child Protective Services Child Care and Child Welfare Services Child Care.

The DSHS administers several child care subsidy programs including Child Protective Services (CPS) child care and Child Welfare Services (CWS) child care. The CPS child care subsidy program provides short-term, time-limited subsidized child care for families that are currently involved in a CPS investigation by the Children's Administration (CA). The CPS child care subsidy must end when the case is no longer classified as a CPS case or is transferred to another program.

The CWS child care subsidy program provides short-term, time-limited subsidized child care for families to avoid out-of-home placement or other state intervention. The CA may authorize CWS child care for a family that has been through a CPS investigation and continues to participate with voluntary services, or for a family in crisis that needs care to avoid out-of-home placement or other state intervention.

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**Summary of Substitute Bill:**

By December 1, 2017, the DEL must adopt rules, in accordance with federal law, that would allow a child to be eligible for WCCC under the vulnerable child eligibility category if they have received either CPS or CWS child care within the prior six months and the case with the DSHS has closed. The DEL must develop a definition of "protective services" that would only apply for the purposes of WCCC eligibility and would not require the DSHS or the DEL to automatically consider these children to officially be in CPS. Additionally, the DEL must adopt rules that clarify that the DSHS's involvement with the family ends for purposes of CPS at the time the CPS case is closed.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

The substitute bill removes the population of children who have reunified with their biological family from an out-of-home placement within the past six months from the vulnerable child eligibility category for the WCCC. Additionally, the substitute bill clarifies that children are eligible for the WCCC if they have received either CPS or CWS child care within the prior six months.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Preliminary fiscal note available.

**Effective Date of Substitute Bill:** The bill takes effect December 1, 2017.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) In 2014 the Legislature passed the Early Start Act, which required the WCCC authorizations to be effective for 12 months, even if the child's parents experience a change in employment or other circumstance that may affect eligibility. Children that receive CPS or CWS child care are no longer eligible for these programs once the case is closed with the DSHS. The bill before you today allows these children to continue in-state subsidized child care programs for a minimum of 12 months, which will help provide much needed stability to a group of highly vulnerable kids.

A large number of the children in the child welfare system are under the age of 5 and therefore in critical periods of their brain development. Despite their young age, these children have often experienced significant trauma and numerous adverse childhood experiences. The research for continuity of care for all children demonstrates that it enhances behavior, education, and personal outcomes. Many families in the child welfare system face significant barriers to building a healthy and stable foundation for their children. Continuous, stable, and high-quality child care will help close the opportunity gap for the children farthest from opportunity. The bill would allow a highly vulnerable group of children to be served in the WCCC and to take advantage of the benefits of high-quality child care.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Representative Senn, prime sponsor; Nancy Ashley, Children's Home Society of Washington State; Alise Hegle, Washington State Parent Allies Coalition; Laurie Lippold, Partners for Our Children; Melissa Johnson, Washington State Association of Head Start and ECEAP Programs; and Jennifer Jennings-Shaffer, Children's Alliance.

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