

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5742

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Human Services, Mental Health & Housing, February 15, 2017

Title: An act relating to working connections child care eligibility for applicants or consumers enrolled in programs that will lead to a baccalaureate degree.

Brief Description: Concerning working connections child care eligibility for applicants or consumers enrolled in programs that will lead to a baccalaureate degree.

Sponsors: Senators Palumbo, Frockt, Rolfes, Kuderer and Saldaña.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services, Mental Health & Housing: 2/13/17, 2/15/17 [DP-WM, w/oRec].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Department of Early Learning to expand the Working Connections Child Care Program eligibility to otherwise-eligible, non-WorkFirst participants enrolled in a program that will lead to a baccalaureate degree.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, MENTAL HEALTH & HOUSING

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators O'Ban, Chair; Miloscia, Vice Chair; Darneille, Ranking Minority Member; Carlyle, Hunt and Walsh.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senator Padden.

Staff: Alison Mendiola (786-7444)

Background: Working Connections Child Care Program. The Working Connections Child Care Program (WCCC) is a subsidized childcare program funded through federal Child Care and Development Funds (CCDF) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). The Department of Early Learning (DEL) is the designated lead agency for administration of

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the CCDF program and sets policy for WCCC. The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) determines eligibility for WCCC and issues childcare subsidy payments to providers. In general, in order to qualify for WCCC a family must have a household income at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level and be working, participating in WorkFirst activities, or enrolled in an educational program.

WCCC Eligibility Based on Educational Enrollment. WCCC rules provide specific guidelines regarding eligibility for WCCC based on enrollment in an educational program. For example, an applicant or customer who is 22 or older is limited to up to 36 months of WCCC benefits during the consumer's lifetime for participation in vocational education. The vocational education program must lead to a degree or certificate in a specific occupation and be offered by the following accredited entities only: a public and private technical college or school; a community college; or a tribal college. A student approved for vocational education must also work an average of 20 or more hours per week or work an average of 16 or more hours per week of paid federal or state work study. WCCC benefits will cover the student's hours of employment—including travel time, the hours of class time, and up to ten hours per week for study time for approved classes. Approved classes include classroom, labs, online class, and unpaid internships required by the vocational educational program.

Families participating in WCCC may receive up to 12 months of subsidized childcare and may pay a monthly co-payment, depending on the family's income level. A child may not be deemed ineligible during the 12-month period due to a change in the family's circumstances. Up to 33,000 households may receive WCCC services at any given time. If program participation reaches the paid caseload maximum of 33,000 households, DSHS will implement a wait list. In the event of a wait list, certain groups will receive priority access to WCCC. These groups include families receiving TANF benefits, children with special needs, and children experiencing homelessness, among others.

Summary of Bill: DEL must establish and implement policies in the WCCC to allow eligibility for an applicant or customer, not participating in the WorkFirst program, who is enrolled in a program that will lead to a baccalaureate degree offered by an institution of higher education that receives a State Need Grant.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 11, 2017.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Students who currently use Working Connections can use the subsidy for a two year degree but not a four year degree. After the second year, they cannot afford child care and then they are priced out of getting a four year degree. A college degree leads to a higher income and it is good for children; maternal education is related to better child outcomes. Veterans could really benefit from this as there is no funding stream for child care subsidy. Public benefits should help people get out of poverty. Washington is one of nine states that do not provide subsidy for four year degrees

and we are one of three that combines school with working requirements. These additional requirements mean a family is more likely to stay in poverty. The Student Achievement Council wants to increase the number of adults getting a college degree but that will not happen with high school graduates alone. Additionally, our state has one of the highest transfer rates from a community and technical college to a four year university. Given that we do not have enough qualified workers in our workforce, we should encourage four year degrees.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Guy Palumbo, Prime Sponsor; Joel Ryan, Washington State Association of Headstart & ECEAP; Elissa Goss, Executive Director, Washington Student Association; Larry Seaquist, citizen; Anna Nepomuceno, Associated Students of UW Tacoma; Tai Yang, Associated Students of UW Bothell; Randy Kelley, The Evergreen State College, Director, Veterans Resource Center.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.