

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5901

As Passed Senate, June 29, 2017

Title: An act relating to eligibility for the early childhood education and assistance program.

Brief Description: Concerning eligibility for the early childhood education and assistance program.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senator Braun).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Ways & Means: 3/21/17, 3/22/17 [DPS, DNP].

Floor Activity:

Passed Senate: 3/23/17, 25-24.

Third Special Session: Passed Senate: 6/29/17, 37-12.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Changes the entitlement for all children for the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program to begin in the 2022-23 school year.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5901 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Braun, Chair; Brown, Vice Chair; Rossi, Vice Chair; Honeyford, Vice Chair, Capital Budget ; Bailey, Becker, Fain, Miloscia, Padden, Rivers, Schoesler, Warnick and Zeiger.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Ranker, Ranking Minority Member; Rolfes, Assistant Ranking Minority Member, Operating Budget; Frockt, Assistant Ranking Minority Member, Capital Budget; Billig, Carlyle, Conway, Darneille, Hasegawa, Keiser and Pedersen.

Staff: Maria Hovde (786-7474)

Background: Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP). This state-funded, voluntary preschool program serves eligible three- and four-year old children.

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.

Children are eligible if they are from a low-income household, eligible for special education due to disability, or impacted by certain risk factors identified by the Department of Early Learning. Children from families with an annual income at or below 110 percent of the federal poverty level—\$26,730 for a family of four—are eligible for enrollment in ECEAP.

Current law requires that state funding continue to be phased in each year until full statewide implementation is achieved in the 2020-21 school year, at which time any eligible child shall be entitled to be enrolled in the program. Additional eligible children may be admitted to the extent that grants and contributions from community sources provide sufficient funds for a program equivalent to that supported by state funds.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program. The entitlement for all eligible children in ECEAP will begin in the 2022-23 school year.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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 on Proposed Substitute: *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* CON: This bill reduces the eligibility of a lot of kids that we are trying to target to break the cycle of poverty. This bill would roll back access for three year olds to high quality child care in a program that helps get kids ready for kindergarten. There is a significant benefit to having children involved in preschool for two years. When the Early Start Act passed and provided a 12-month authorization, it was more about focusing on what's needed for the child and the child's development. This would move back to more paperwork and more bureaucracy and make it more difficult for children to get what they need to be ready for school. When you cut services to three year olds in rural areas, you are cutting the few services that are there. These services tend to be comprehensive and serve a variety of needs in the rural communities. WCCC is a critical support for domestic violence survivors and requiring them to pursue child support is dangerous for them. This bill would add an additional 24,000 screenings that would need to be done and the Community Services Division does not have the capacity to ensure that the good cause waiver is administered properly, which affects safety to the domestic violence survivor community. Child support was implemented in 2011 and it was rescinded in 2012 because of the problems it created. As written, it would require the department to violate tribal agreements, it would add inefficiencies and additional costs, could result in child support payment delays, could put domestic violence survivors in danger, and could cause problems meeting federal requirements.

Persons Testifying: CON: Katy Warren, Washington State Association of Headstart & ECEAP; Matthew Solomon, ESD 113; Carey Morris, WA State Coalition Against Domestic Violence; Katie Nelson, WA Federation of State Employees; Paul Berendt, SCAN.

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