

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 6419

As Amended by House, March 1, 2018

Title: An act relating to promoting access to the Washington early childhood education and assistance program.

Brief Description: Concerning access to the Washington early childhood education and assistance program.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators Rolfes, Zeiger, Billig, Wellman, Conway, Darneille, Kuderer, Palumbo and Walsh).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/30/18, 2/01/18 [DPS, w/oRec].

Floor Activity:

Passed Senate: 2/08/18, 45-1.

Passed House: 3/01/18, 70-28.

Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill

- Directs the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) to adopt rules that allow children whose families do not meet income eligibility requirements but are homeless or impacted by certain risk factors to be included in the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) on a space available basis.
- Provides that these children are not part of the state-funded ECEAP entitlement, which will become an entitlement in the 2022-23 school year.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6419 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Wellman, Chair; Rolfes, Vice Chair; Zeiger, Ranking Member; Billig, Hawkins, Hunt, Mullet, Pedersen and Rivers.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senator Padden.

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: Ailey Kato (786-7434)

Background: ECEAP. This state-funded voluntary preschool program serves eligible children ages three and four. An eligible child is a child not eligible for kindergarten and:

- whose family income is at or below 110 percent of the federal poverty level—\$27,060 for a family of four; or
- is eligible for special education.

Other children may be eligible under rules adopted by the Department of Early Learning (DEL) if the number of such children equals not more than 10 percent of enrollment in the program.

Current DEL rules provide that an eligible child may be from a family with income that exceeds 110 percent of the federal poverty level if the child is impacted by specific developmental or environmental risk factors that are linked by research to school performance.

State law provides that priority for enrollment must be given to children from families with the lowest income, children in foster care, or to eligible children from families with multiple needs. Current DEL rules also prioritize children who are four years old or homeless.

State law requires that state funding continue to be phased in each year until full statewide implementation is achieved in the 2022-23 school year, at which time any eligible child shall be entitled to be enrolled in the program.

DCYF will administer ECEAP starting on July 1, 2018.

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. This federal act provides federal grant funding to support school districts that serve homeless students.

Summary of First Substitute Bill: DCYF must adopt rules that allow the inclusion of children in ECEAP whose family income is above 110 percent of the federal poverty level if the number of such children equals not more than 25 percent of total statewide enrollment. ECEAP may allow enrollment of these children on a space available basis.

Children who are over income must be homeless or impacted by specific developmental or environmental risk factors that are linked by research to school performance. Homeless means without a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence as set forth in the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

Children who are over income are not to be considered eligible children for ECEAP and are not considered to be part of the state-funded entitlement.

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 Original Bill: *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: This bill solves an issue for parts of the state, including more rural areas, where there are some ECEAP seats that are not filled and are moved to other areas of the state. The income threshold for ECEAP is very low. This bill would give providers flexibility to invite children who are just above the income threshold but would greatly benefit from the program. These children may experience trauma, adverse childhood experiences, and other risk factors. ECEAP can help prepare these children for kindergarten.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Christine Rolfes, Prime Sponsor; Melissa Johnson, Washington State Association of Headstart, ECEAP; Alicia Brender, Bellevue School District Early Learning; Kevin Rutherford, citizen; Mary Rushton, Centralia College ECEAP.

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

EFFECT OF HOUSE AMENDMENT(S):

- Provides that children who meet the definition of "eligible child" for ECEAP receive first priority for enrollment.
- Establishes other priorities, as space is available, to certain children: children who are experiencing homelessness, involved in the child welfare system, or have a developmental delay or disability that does not meet the eligibility criteria for special education.