H-3646.2

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**HOUSE BILL 2619**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**State of Washington 66th Legislature 2020 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Shewmake, Chapman, Ramel, Springer, Van Werven, Senn, Doglio, Goodman, and Tharinger

AN ACT Relating to increasing early learning access through licensing, eligibility, and rate improvements; amending RCW 43.216.514 and 43.216.305; adding a new section to chapter 43.216 RCW; creating new sections; and providing expiration dates.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  This act may be known and cited as the rural child care access act.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The legislature finds that many rural communities face child care and early learning supply shortages due to factors that include geographic isolation and fewer providers. These shortages contribute to economic challenges in the child care market, undermining child care affordability for families and threatening the viability of child care businesses. Families deserve access to a full range of child care and early learning choices and providers need stable funding that is essential to meet high quality standards.

(2)The legislature further finds that while federal child care and development fund rules allow child care subsidy rates to exceed private pay rates in order to pay for quality care and health and safety requirements, state rules require child care subsidy rates to be lower than a provider's private pay rate with limited exceptions. This limitation has the effect of forcing child care providers to raise private pay rates when state subsidy rates go up, resulting in families who do not qualify for subsidy leaving licensed care because it has become unaffordable.

(3) Therefore, it is the intent of the legislature to implement policies to relieve providers and families by streamlining child care access, balancing subsidy requirements, and supporting the needs of rural communities.

**Sec.**  RCW 43.216.514 and 2019 c 408 s 7 are each amended to read as follows:

(1)(a) The department shall prioritize children for enrollment in the early childhood education and assistance program who are eligible pursuant to RCW 43.216.505.

(b) A child who is eligible at the time of enrollment in the early childhood education and assistance program maintains program eligibility until the child begins kindergarten.

(2) As space is available, children may be included in the early childhood education and assistance program pursuant to RCW 43.216.512. Priority within this group must be given first to children with incomes up to one hundred thirty percent of the federal poverty level.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 43.216 RCW to read as follows:

(1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the department may pay child day care centers and family day care providers a subsidy rate that is equal to or higher than the provider's private pay rate in order to support high quality care and the implementation of health, safety, and quality requirements.

(2) The department must adopt rules to implement this section.

**Sec.**  RCW 43.216.305 and 2018 c 58 s 40 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) Each agency shall make application for a license or the continuation of a full license to the department on forms prescribed by the department. Upon receipt of such application, the department shall either grant or deny a license or continuation of a full license within ninety days. A license or continuation shall be granted if the agency meets the minimum requirements set forth in this chapter and the departmental requirements consistent with this chapter, except that an initial license may be issued as provided in RCW 43.216.315. The department shall consider whether an agency is in good standing, as defined in subsection (4)(b) of this section, before granting a continuation of a full license. Full licenses provided for in this chapter shall continue to remain valid so long as the licensee meets the requirements for a nonexpiring license in subsection (2) of this section and may be transferred to a new licensee in the event of a transfer of ownership of a child care operation. The licensee, however, shall advise the secretary of any material change in circumstances which might constitute grounds for reclassification of license as to category. The license issued under this chapter ((~~is not transferable and~~)) applies only to the licensee and the location stated in the application. For licensed family day care homes having an acceptable history of child care, the license may remain in effect for two weeks after a move.

(2) In order to qualify for a nonexpiring full license, a licensee must meet the following requirements on an annual basis as established from the date of initial licensure:

(a) Submit the annual licensing fee;

(b) Submit a declaration to the department indicating the licensee's intent to continue operating a licensed child care program, or the intent to cease operation on a date certain;

(c) Submit a declaration of compliance with all licensing rules; and

(d) Submit background check applications on the schedule established by the department.

(3) If a licensee fails to meet the requirements in subsection (2) of this section for continuation of a full license the license expires and the licensee must submit a new application for licensure under this chapter.

(4)(a) Nothing about the nonexpiring license process may interfere with the department's established monitoring practice.

(b) For the purpose of this section, an agency is considered to be in good standing if in the intervening period between monitoring visits the agency does not have any of the following:

(i) Valid complaints;

(ii) A history of noncompliance related to those valid complaints or pending from prior monitoring visits; or

(iii) Other information that when evaluated would result in a finding of noncompliance with this section.

(c) The department shall consider whether an agency is in good standing when determining the most appropriate approach and process for monitoring visits, for the purposes of administrative efficiency while protecting children, consistent with this chapter. If the department determines that an agency is not in good standing, the department may issue a probationary license, as provided in RCW 43.216.320.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) By November 1, 2020, the department of children, youth, and families must provide the appropriate committees of the legislature with a list of recommended child care licensing innovations designed to improve access to care in rural areas of the state. The recommendations must include estimated costs for each item and any statutory changes necessary for implementation.

(2) This section expires November 1, 2021.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The department of children, youth, and families shall establish a pilot project to create a dual license that allows individuals to receive a combined foster care and child care license. The pilot project must commence by July 1, 2020, and conclude by June 30, 2022.

(2) The department must consult with stakeholders in the foster care and child care sectors during the design and implementation of the pilot project.

(3) The department may adopt rules to implement the pilot project and may waive or adapt licensing requirements when necessary to allow for the implementation of a dual license for individuals.

(4) The department must provide a brief status report to the appropriate committees of the legislature and the governor by July 1, 2021, describing implementation of the pilot project. By November 1, 2022, the department must recommend to the governor and the appropriate committees of the legislature whether the dual license pilot project should be made permanent.

(5) This section expires November 1, 2023.

**--- END ---**