

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESSB 6540

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

Title: An act relating to working connections child care payment authorizations.

Brief Description: Concerning working connections child care payment authorizations.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Wilson, C., Wellman, Dhingra, Hasegawa, Kuderer and Saldaña).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Human Services & Early Learning: 2/26/20, 2/27/20 [DP].

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill

- Requires a household's 12-month authorization period for the Working Connections Child Care program to begin on the date that child care is expected to begin.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & EARLY LEARNING

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Senn, Chair; Callan, Vice Chair; Frame, Vice Chair; Dent, Ranking Minority Member; Eslick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; McCaslin, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Corry, Goodman, Griffey, Kilduff, Klippert, Lovick and Ortiz-Self.

Staff: Dawn Eychaner (786-7135).

Background:

The Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) program is a subsidized child care program for low-income families. The state pays part of the cost of child care when a parent is employed or participating in approved work activities, with some exceptions. Depending on income and household size, the family may be required to pay a copayment directly to their child care provider.

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.

To be eligible for 12 months of child care subsidy, a family must have a household income at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty guideline at the time of application and meet work requirements. The WCCC program is funded largely by the federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF). Federal rules require a minimum 12-month eligibility period for families receiving child care funded by the CCDF, regardless of temporary changes in parents' work, approved activities, or income as long as the income does not exceed 85 percent of the state median income. The stated federal intent of this 12-month provision is to promote continuity of care and extend the time period that eligible children and families have access to child care.

State statute requires 12-month authorizations for recipients of the WCCC program subsidy. The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) administers the WCCC program. The DCYF begins the 12-month period when the participant has completed the required WCCC application and verification process and is working or participating in an approved activity. There may be a delay between a participant's eligibility determination and when the family receives an authorization for care.

Summary of Bill:

A household's 12-month WCCC authorization period must begin on the date that child care is expected to begin. If a newly eligible household does not begin care within 12 months of being determined eligible by the DCYF, the household must reapply in order to qualify for benefits.

The term "authorization" is defined as a transaction created by the DCYF that allows a child care provider to claim payment for care. The DCYF may adjust an authorization based on a household's eligibility status.

Statutory content is reorganized.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on January 1, 2021.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill starts the 12-month clock when a family actually finds and starts receiving child care. There are issues with accessibility and affordability, and this will help with lack of access to care across the state. Sometimes it takes three or four months to find care, and families are penalized for not being able to locate quality care in their communities. Today securing living wage jobs and affordable child care can be the biggest stressors for families.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Wilson, prime sponsor.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.