

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2456

As of March 3, 2020

Title: An act relating to working connections child care eligibility.

Brief Description: Concerning working connections child care eligibility.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Callan, Eslick, Ramos, Ryu, Shewmake, Chapman, Senn, Frame, Thai, Bergquist, Kilduff, Stonier, Tharinger, Davis, Macri, Pollet, Goodman, Wylie and Doglio; by request of Governor Inslee).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/13/20, 60-37.

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/21/20 [DPA-WM, w/oRec].
Ways & Means: 2/29/20.

Brief Summary of Amended Bill

- Directs the Department of Children, Youth, and Families to extend a homeless grace period in the Working Connections Child Care program, which would allow families 12 months instead of 4 months to provide verification of participation in approved activities and other information.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

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

Signed by Senators Wellman, Chair; Wilson, C., Vice Chair; Hawkins, Ranking Member; Hunt, McCoy, Mullet, Pedersen, Salomon and Wagoner.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Holy and Padden.

Staff: Ailey Kato (786-7434)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Sarah Emmans (786-7478)

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.

Background: Working Connections Child Care. This federally and state-funded program provides child care subsidies to families with an income at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level—\$43,440 for a family of three. The state pays part of the cost of childcare when a parent is employed, self-employed, or in approved work activities, except in certain circumstances. The family is responsible for making a copayment to the child care provider based on the family's countable income.

Authorizations for a Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) subsidy are effective for 12 months. The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) must manage the program, so the average monthly caseload does not exceed 33,000 households and must give access to the program based on priorities specified in the operating budget.

Under DCYF rules, WCCC benefits for an eligible consumer begin when the consumer has completed the application and verification process within 30 days of the application, and the consumer is working or participating in an approved activity.

Homeless Grace Period. A current WCCC rule provides eligibility to a homeless grace period for families experiencing homelessness if:

- homelessness is verified within 30 days of application;
- the family has not received a homeless grace period in the previous 12 months; and
- the family meets all eligibility requirements except that families have four months to provide (1) verification of participation in approved work activities, (2) required third-party verification of employment, and (3) verification of payment or payment plan arrangements for an outstanding payment.

Families remain eligible for the homeless grace period through the end of the fourth month, even if their homeless status changes.

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. This federal law provides funding to states to support programs serving students experiencing homelessness. Under the act, "homeless" means being without a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

Summary of Amended Bill: DCYF must extend the homeless grace period from a 4-month grace period to a 12-month grace period. "Homeless" means without a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence as defined by McKinney-Vento.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available. New fiscal note requested on February 14, 2020.

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

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on July 1, 2020.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Bill as Amended by Committee (Early Learning & K-12 Education): PRO: The homeless grace period was first created in 2017 to help families who were facing barriers with accessing WCCC subsidy. Four months is not enough time to allow families to find work, housing, and child care. Extending the homeless grace

period to 12 months would allow families to have stable and quality child care for their children, which helps mitigate the trauma children are experiencing and helps prepare them for kindergarten. Until child care and housing is readily available, this grace period needs to be 12 months.

Persons Testifying (Early Learning & K-12 Education): PRO: Representative Lisa Callan, Prime Sponsor; Melissa Johnson, Washington State Association of HeadStart & ECEAP; Norma Lobo, Child Care Resources.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Early Learning & K-12 Education): No one.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Bill as Amended by Early Learning & K-12 Education (Ways & Means): PRO: The homeless grace period was created in 2017 to address barriers for families experiencing homelessness in accessing Working Connections Child Care subsidies. The data from the first two years of this program demonstrate that for half of those families accessing the grace period, they were not able to find child care within that four month period. Many of these families had difficulties because they could not find a childcare provider that would take their voucher for that four months. It takes a long to help families out of homelessness. Almost all families need help for eight or nine months, and that is because it takes them that long to find a job. These families also may have behavioral health appointments, employment training needs, and other supports that they would need child care for. Extending the grace period from 4 months to 12 months would maintain access to the high quality learning environment for homeless kids. This is critical to their childhood development. It will also give families the time needed to stabilize their situations, resolve issues relating to homelessness, and find housing and employment.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: Melissa Johnson, Washington State Association of Headstart and ECEAP; Melanie Smith, Wellspring Family Services.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Ways & Means): No one.