

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5820

As of February 17, 2019

Title: An act relating to increasing eligibility for child care and early learning programs for homeless and other vulnerable children.

Brief Description: Increasing eligibility for child care and early learning programs for homeless and other vulnerable children.

Sponsors: Senators Nguyen, Randall, Hasegawa, Keiser, Hunt, Kuderer and Wilson, C..

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/15/19.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes categorical eligibility for homeless children and Indian children in the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program.
- Requires 12-month authorizations for the Working Connections Child Care program for homeless children and Indian children.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Ailey Kato (786-7434)

Background: Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program. The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) administers the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) to assist eligible children with educational, social, health, nutritional, and cultural development to enhance their opportunity for success in the common school system.

Current law provides that this state-funded preschool program will become an entitlement in the 2022-23 school year for eligible children. "Eligible children" means a child not eligible for kindergarten and:

- whose family income is at or below 110 percent of the federal poverty level;
- a child eligible for special education preschool due to disability; and
- may include children who are eligible under rules adopted by DCYF if the number of such children equals not more than 10 percent of the total enrollment.

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.

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 —\$51,500 for a family of four. The state pays part of the cost of childcare when a parent is employed, self-employed, or in approved work activities unless the family has received child welfare, child protective, or family assessment response (FAR) services in the previous six months. The family is responsible for making a copayment to the child care provider based on the family's countable income.

Authorizations for a WCCC subsidy are effective for 12 months. 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 budget.

WCCC is partially funded by the federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF). CCDF rules allow states to designate certain vulnerable populations as in need of protective services. Work and income requirements may be waived for these populations. Washington's definition of protective services includes families who are homeless during the designated four-month grace period, children who are homeless because of a disaster, children receiving FAR services, and children in the parental control of a nonneedy relative.

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. This federal law provides funding to states to support programs serving students experiencing homelessness. It defines "homeless children" as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

Summary of Bill: The bill as referred to committee not considered.

Summary of Bill (Proposed Substitute): Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program. Two new categories of children are eligible for ECEAP: (1) a child who is homeless, and (2) an Indian child as defined in rule by DCYF after consultation and agreement with tribes.

Working Connections Child Care. DCYF must designate homeless children and Indian children as vulnerable populations pursuant to federal law to allow eligibility and twelve-month authorizations for WCCC subsidies for homeless children and Indian children.

DCYF must consult with tribal representatives to develop an agreed-upon definition of Indian child by July 1, 2020 and adopt the definition in rule. Homeless means without a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence as defined by McKinney-Vento.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 1, 2019.

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: PRO: This bill would provide stability and additional support to some of the most vulnerable families in the state. Homeless children and tribal children are among the least likely to be ready for kindergarten. Native children, regardless of income, have many risk factors. If these children attend ECEAP, a high quality early learning environment, they are more likely to be ready. Tribes that are currently offering ECEAP are considering closing these programs because their children are not eligible. This bill extends the four-month grade period for homeless families to twelve months. Housing programs can take longer than four months.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Joe Nguyen, Prime Sponsor; Melanie Smith, Wellspring Family Services; Katy Warren, Washington State Association of Headstart and ECEAP; Nigel Lawrence, The Suquamish Tribe; Sarah Brady, Child Care Resources.

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