

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 2101

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

**Title:** An act relating to eliminating child care licensing fees.

**Brief Description:** Eliminating child care licensing fees.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Rule, Timmons, Senn, Leavitt, Cheney, Tharinger, Riccelli, Reeves and Shavers.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Human Services, Youth, & Early Learning: 1/9/24, 1/12/24 [DP].

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Prohibits the Department of Children, Youth, and Families from charging fees to obtain a child care license.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, YOUTH, & EARLY LEARNING

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Senn, Chair; Cortes, Vice Chair; Rule, Vice Chair; Eslick, Ranking Minority Member; Couture, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Callan, Dent, Goodman, Ortiz-Self and Taylor.

**Minority Report:** Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Walsh.

**Staff:** Luke Wickham (786-7146).

**Background:**

*Child Care Licensing.*

Generally, any person or entity that provides child care or early learning services outside a

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child's own home must obtain a license from the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF). There are some exemptions from the general licensing requirement for:

- certain relatives;
- friends;
- neighbors;
- parents exchanging care of their own children;
- nursery schools providing early childhood education for less than four hours per day;
- schools;
- seasonal camps;
- certain facilities providing care for less than 24 hours while the parents remain on the premises;
- certain recreational or educational programs;
- government programs;
- programs within a federally recognized tribal reservation;
- military programs; and
- programs offering early learning and support services.

There are different types of licensed child care programs in Washington as follows:

- family home early learning programs that provide child care in their family living quarters for 12 or fewer children;
- child care centers that provide care for a group of children ages birth through 12 years old;
- school-age programs that provide care for children ages 5 through 12 when the children are not attending school; and
- outdoor, nature-based programs that provide care to preschool or school-age children in an outdoor, natural space and teach a nature-based curriculum.

#### *Child Care Licensing Fees.*

The DCYF is required to charge fees for obtaining a child care license. These fees are due with an applicant's initial license application and annually thereafter. The annual fee is as follows:

- \$30 for family home early learning programs; and
- \$125 for center early learning programs for the first 12 children plus \$12 for each additional child.

The DCYF was prohibited from imposing child care licensing fees from July 25, 2021, to June 30, 2023.

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#### **Summary of Bill:**

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families is prohibited from charging fees to obtain a child care license.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 4, 2024.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) A variety of child care options are needed. It does not make any sense to charge additional fees to child care providers.

With this bill, child care providers can use the \$30 licensing fee to go toward pencils, boots, mud suits, and other important items to support children.

Advancing this bill is one way to remove barriers on the child care system in a time when providers are navigating many ongoing financial challenges.

In King County, 38 percent of children do not have access to licensed child care and in Pierce County 46 percent of children do not have access to licensed child care.

This bill makes permanent the suspension of child care licensing fees that were suspended from July 2021 through June of 2023.

Fees can discourage qualified, affordable child care providers from becoming licensed.

By making the suspension of child care licensing fees permanent, we can increase the number of child care slots due to accessibility for new providers and remove some of the stress for the people that so many of us rely on to carry out our day-to-day activities.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Representative Alicia Rule, prime sponsor; Alejandra Alarcon; Mary Curry, Linked Arms ADOS Association; Logan Endres, BrightSpark Early Learning; Paula Sardinias, Washington Build Black Alliance; Emily Murphy, Child Care Aware of Washington; Donna Christensen, Washington Childcare Center Association; and Meredith Hayes, Whatcom Child Care Coalition.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.