

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5030

As of January 14, 2025

Title: An act relating to improving access to educational services by reducing barriers to obtaining vital records and allowing alternative forms of documentation.

Brief Description: Improving access to educational services by reducing barriers to obtaining vital records and allowing alternative forms of documentation.

Sponsors: Senators Wilson, C., Cortes, Harris, Hasegawa, Krishnadasan, Nobles, Saldaña, Salomon, Trudeau, Valdez and Wellman.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/14/25.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Prohibits the Department of Health and local registrars from charging a birth certificate fee when a birth certificate is requested by a parent or guardian who has a child who is a member of an assistance unit that is eligible for or receiving food benefits and enrolling in an early learning program or a public school.
- Requires the Department of Children, Youth, and Families and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to adopt a rule that requires the acceptance of birth certificates, passports, and alternative documents.
- Provides examples of alternative documents.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Ailey Kato (786-7434)

Background: Birth Certificates. The Department of Health (DOH) and local registrars

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

must charge a \$25 fee for certification or informational copy of a vital record or for a search of the vital records system when no matching record was identified except in certain circumstances. Vital records mean a report of a vital life event that has been registered, which includes birth certificates.

Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program Enrollment. The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) is the state's voluntary preschool program administered by the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF). This program serves eligible three- to five-year-old children who are not age-eligible for kindergarten. DCYF rule requires a child to be at least three by August 31st of the school year.

Kindergarten Through Grade 12 Enrollment. For K-12 education, it is the general policy of the state that common schools be open to admission of all persons who are 5 years of age and less than 21. Except as provided in state law or the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) rules, school districts may establish uniform entry qualifications, including birthdate requirements for admission to kindergarten and first grade programs. Such rules may provide exceptions based on the ability, or the need, or both, of an individual student.

OSPI rule requires a child to be five years old as of midnight August 31st of the year of entry to be entitled to enter kindergarten and six years old to enter first grade unless an individual exception is made.

Federal guidance states that school officials may request documentation to show that a student falls within minimum and maximum age requirements. School districts typically accept a variety of documents for this purpose, such as a religious, hospital, or physician's certificate showing date of birth; an entry in a family bible; an adoption record; an affidavit from a parent; a birth certificate; or previously verified school record.

Summary of Bill: DOH and local registrars may not charge a fee for issuing a birth certificate when it is requested by a parent or guardian who has a child who is a member of an assistance unit that is eligible for or receiving basic food benefits for the purposes of enrollment in an early learning or public school program.

DCYF must adopt a rule that requires ECEAP contractors and providers to accept birth certificates, passports, and alternative documents to show a child's age or date of birth for the purposes of enrollment. A nonexhaustive list of alternative documents are specified.

OSPI must adopt the same rule for K-12 enrollment.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 7, 2025.

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: For some families, paying a fee for a birth certificate can become a barrier for entry into programs. People may lose their birth certificates if they move, are homeless, experience a natural disaster, are immigrants, or are fleeing domestic violence. Federal guidance provides a wider range of documents that can prove a child's age than what is currently accepted, and there are many more available electronic records that can show a child's age. This bill will connect vulnerable Washingtonians to critical services. Many working families are missing out on important early intervention services simply because they do not have their child's birth certificate.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Claire Wilson, Prime Sponsor; Alexandra Clifthorne.

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