

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5907

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Early Learning & K-12 Education, January 29, 2026

Title: An act relating to expanding access to the early childhood education and assistance program for military families.

Brief Description: Expanding access to the early childhood education and assistance program for military families.

Sponsors: Senators Nobles, Wagoner, Alvarado, Chapman, Conway, Krishnadasan, Liias, Lovick, Orwall, Riccelli, Salomon, Shewmake and Wilson, C..

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/20/26, 1/29/26 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Expands allowable enrollment in the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), as space is available, to children from a household with a parent who is a military member and has a family income under a specified threshold.
- Adds military-related prioritization factors for allowable enrollment in ECEAP.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Wellman, Chair; Nobles, Vice Chair; Wilson, C., Vice Chair; Harris, Ranking Member; Cortes, Dozier, Hansen, Krishnadasan and McCune.

Staff: Ailey Kato (786-7434)

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.

Background: Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program. The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) is the state's voluntary preschool program that provides comprehensive services including education, health, and family support and is administered by the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF). Eligible child, for the purposes of ECEAP, means a child who is at least three years old and not age-eligible for kindergarten, not a participant in a federal or state program providing comprehensive services, and who:

- has a family income at or below 36 percent of the state median income (SMI);
- is experiencing homelessness;
- has participated in certain early intervention programs;
- is eligible for special education due to disability;
- is Indian and is at or below 100 percent of SMI; or
- meets criteria under rules adopted by DCYF if the number of such children equals not more than 10 percent of the total enrollment.

In the 2030-31 school year, eligibility is expanded to children who have a family income at or below 50 percent of SMI, and any eligible child will be entitled to be enrolled in the program.

Allowable Enrollment. State law directs DCYF to adopt rules that allow the enrollment of children who are not otherwise eligible for ECEAP, as space is available, if the number of such children equals not more than 25 percent of total statewide enrollment, and the child has a family income above 36 percent and at or below 50 percent of SMI, and the child has at least one of the risk factors that have a disproportionate effect on kindergarten readiness and school performance. DCYF must have a prioritization system for these risk factors, which include but are not limited to:

- family income;
- child welfare system involvement;
- domestic violence;
- English as a second language;
- expulsion from an early learning setting;
- a parent who is incarcerated; or
- a parent with a behavioral health treatment need.

Children who are allowed to enroll are not considered eligible children for future state-funded entitlement. Allowable enrollment expires August 1, 2030.

Working Connections Child Care. The Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) Program is a federally and state-funded program that provides subsidies for child care to families with incomes at or below 60 percent of the state median income and meets other eligibility requirements. The state pays the cost of child care, minus the family's copayment amount, when a parent is working or participating in approved work-related activities, or if the family is categorically eligible for the program.

Beginning July 1, 2029, a family is eligible for WCCC when the household's annual income is above 60 percent and at or below 75 percent of SMI and meets all other eligibility requirements. Beginning July 1, 2031, subject to appropriations, a family is eligible if the household's annual income is at or below 85 percent of SMI and meets other eligibility requirements.

Summary of Bill: Allowable enrollment in ECEAP is extended to children from a household with a parent who is a military member and has a family income above 36 percent of state median income and at or below the maximum household income for WCCC.

The following factors for allowable enrollment in ECEAP for the purposes of prioritization are added:

- a military member parent who is currently deployed or has scheduled deployment within the current school year; and
- a military member parent who is a single custodial parent.

Military member means an active member of the United States Armed Forces, a member of a military reserve component, or a member of the national guard, who is either stationed in or a resident of the state.

Allowable enrollment for households with a parent who is a military member, as space is available and subject to appropriated funding, does not expire.

Appropriation: The bill contains a section or sections to limit implementation to the availability of amounts appropriated for that specific purpose.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Effective Date: The bill contains several effective dates. Please refer to the bill.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Military families have changing needs and face a lot of unpredictability and high stress, which can impact a child's well-being. There is a demand for early childhood education for these families. This bill will help increase flexibility and allow military families to be served by ECEAP. This will be a positive impact for ECEAP without a fiscal cost and will help leverage the Ballmer gift of ECEAP funding. This bill helps provide safe, stable, and high quality child care to military families, which they deserve. This bill is a modest and cost-effective adjustment that recognizes the sacrifices of the state's military families.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator T'wina Nobles, Prime Sponsor; Kimberly Headrick, Medical Lake School District; Alex Galeana, Children's Campaign Fund Action; Joel Ryan,

Washington State Association of Head Start & ECEAP; Lori Pittman, Puget Sound ESD;
Matthew Shillingburg, Deputy Chair Veterans Legislative Coalition representing the VFW.

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