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**SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 2099**

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**State of Washington**

**69th Legislature**

**2026 Regular Session**

**By** House Early Learning & Human Services (originally sponsored by Representatives Leavitt, Penner, Barnard, Timmons, Reed, Kloba, Ryu, Parshley, Zahn, Richards, Schmidt, Doglio, Simmons, Berry, Eslick, Obras, Paul, Nance, Scott, Callan, Goodman, Reeves, Shavers, Fosse, Bergquist, Salahuddin, and Bernbaum)

READ FIRST TIME 01/27/26.

1 AN ACT Relating to expanding access to the early childhood  
2 education and assistance program for military families; amending RCW  
3 43.216.512 and 43.216.514; adding a new section to chapter 43.216  
4 RCW; and providing an effective date.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

6 **Sec. 1.** RCW 43.216.512 and 2025 c 412 s 12 are each amended to  
7 read as follows:

8 (1) The department shall adopt rules that allow the enrollment of  
9 children in the early childhood education and assistance program, as  
10 space is available, if the number of such children equals not more  
11 than 25 percent of total statewide enrollment, when the child is not  
12 eligible under RCW 43.216.505 and (~~has~~):

13 (a) Has a family income level above 36 percent of the state  
14 median income but at or below 50 percent of the state median income  
15 adjusted for family size and the child meets at least one of the risk  
16 factor criterion described in subsection (2) of this section; or

17 (b) Has a family income level above 36 percent of the state  
18 median income but at or below the maximum household income for  
19 working connections child care eligibility as established in RCW  
20 43.216.802, adjusted for family size, and is from a household with a  
21 parent who is a military member.

1 (2) Children enrolled in the early childhood education and  
2 assistance program pursuant to this section must be prioritized for  
3 available funded slots according to a prioritization system adopted  
4 in rule by the department that considers risk factors that have a  
5 disproportionate effect on kindergarten readiness and school  
6 performance, including:

7 (a) Family income as a percent of the state median income;

8 (b) Child welfare system involvement;

9 (c) Domestic violence;

10 (d) English as a second language;

11 (e) Expulsion from an early learning setting;

12 (f) A parent who is incarcerated;

13 (g) A parent with a behavioral health treatment need; (~~and~~)

14 (h) A military member parent who is currently deployed, deployed  
15 within the last 12 months, or will be deployed within the current  
16 school year, or for a total of 19 or more months during the child's  
17 lifetime;

18 (i) A military member parent who is a single custodial parent;  
19 and

20 (j) Other risk factors determined by the department to be linked  
21 by research to school performance.

22 (3) Children enrolled in the early childhood education and  
23 assistance program under this section are not considered eligible  
24 children as defined in RCW 43.216.505 and are not considered to be  
25 part of the state-funded entitlement required in RCW 43.216.556.

26 (4) For purposes of this section, "military member" includes any  
27 of the following who are either stationed in or a resident of  
28 Washington state:

29 (a) An active member of the United States armed forces;

30 (b) A member of a military reserve component;

31 (c) A member of the national guard;

32 (d) A national oceanic and atmospheric administration  
33 commissioned corps member; or

34 (e) A United States public health service commissioned corps  
35 member.

36 (5) This section expires August 1, 2030.

37 NEW SECTION. Sec. 2. A new section is added to chapter 43.216  
38 RCW under the subchapter heading "early childhood education and  
39 assistance" to read as follows:

1 (1) The department shall adopt rules that allow the enrollment of  
2 children in the early childhood education and assistance program, as  
3 space is available and subject to appropriated funding, when the  
4 child:

5 (a) Is not eligible under RCW 43.216.505;

6 (b) Is from a household with a parent who is a military member;  
7 and

8 (c) Has a family income level above 50 percent of the state  
9 median income but at or below the maximum household income for  
10 working connections child care eligibility as established in RCW  
11 43.216.802, adjusted for family size.

12 (2) Children enrolled in the early childhood education and  
13 assistance program pursuant to this section must be prioritized for  
14 available funded slots according to a prioritization system adopted  
15 in rule by the department that considers risk factors that have a  
16 disproportionate effect on kindergarten readiness and school  
17 performance, including:

18 (a) Family income as a percent of the state median income;

19 (b) Child welfare system involvement;

20 (c) Domestic violence;

21 (d) English as a second language;

22 (e) Expulsion from an early learning setting;

23 (f) A parent who is incarcerated;

24 (g) A parent with a behavioral health treatment need;

25 (h) A military member parent who is currently deployed, deployed  
26 within the last 12 months, or will be deployed within the current  
27 school year, or for a total of 19 or more months during the child's  
28 lifetime;

29 (i) A military member parent who is a single custodial parent;

30 and

31 (j) Other risk factors determined by the department to be linked  
32 by research to school performance.

33 (3) Children enrolled in the early childhood education and  
34 assistance program under this section are not considered eligible  
35 children as defined in RCW 43.216.505 and are not considered to be  
36 part of the state-funded entitlement required in RCW 43.216.556.

37 (4) For purposes of this section, "military member" includes any  
38 of the following who are either stationed in or a resident of  
39 Washington state:

40 (a) An active member of the United States armed forces;

- 1 (b) A member of a military reserve component;  
2 (c) A member of the national guard;  
3 (d) A national oceanic and atmospheric administration  
4 commissioned corps member; or  
5 (e) A United States public health service commissioned corps  
6 member.

7 **Sec. 3.** RCW 43.216.514 and 2021 c 199 s 507 are each amended to  
8 read as follows:

9 (1)(a) The department shall prioritize children for enrollment in  
10 the early childhood education and assistance program who are eligible  
11 pursuant to RCW 43.216.505.

12 (b) A child who is eligible at the time of enrollment in the  
13 early childhood education and assistance program maintains program  
14 eligibility until the child begins kindergarten.

15 (2) As space is available, children may be included in the early  
16 childhood education and assistance program pursuant to ((RCW  
17 ~~43.216.512~~) section 2 of this act.

18 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** Sections 2 and 3 of this act take effect  
19 August 1, 2030.

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