
SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5961

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2026 Regular Session

By Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators C. Wilson, Dhingra, Frame, Nobles, Shewmake, and Wellman; by request of Superintendent of Public Instruction)

READ FIRST TIME 01/22/26.

1 AN ACT Relating to transferring early literacy programs from the
2 department of children, youth, and families to the office of the
3 superintendent of public instruction; amending RCW 43.216.200; adding
4 new sections to chapter 28A.300 RCW; and recodifying RCW 43.216.200.

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

6 **Sec. 1.** RCW 43.216.200 and 2022 c 39 s 1 are each amended to
7 read as follows:

8 (1) The following definitions apply to this section:

9 (a) "Eligible children" means children from birth to age five;

10 (b) "National nonprofit foundation" means a national nonprofit
11 foundation that exists for the purpose of working with local entities
12 to identify eligible children and mail age-appropriate, high quality
13 books each month to those children at no cost to families; and

14 (c) "Program" means the imagination library of Washington program
15 created under subsection (2) of this section.

16 (2) Subject to the amounts appropriated for this specific
17 purpose, the (~~department, in coordination with the~~) office of the
18 superintendent of public instruction(~~(,)~~) shall select a Washington
19 state-based qualified 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization physically
20 located in Washington state to create and operate the program. The
21 nonprofit organization selected under this subsection shall:

- 1 (a) Manage the daily operations of the program;
2 (b) Establish affiliate programs across the state;
3 (c) Advance and strengthen the affiliate programs with the goal
4 of increasing enrollment in those programs;
5 (d) Develop, promote, and coordinate a public awareness campaign
6 to make donors aware of the opportunity to donate to affiliate
7 programs and make the public aware of the opportunity to register
8 eligible children to receive books through the program; and
9 (e) Contract with a national nonprofit foundation to provide age-
10 appropriate, high quality books each month to eligible children at no
11 cost to families.

12 (3) (a) By November 1, (~~(2022)~~) 2026, and annually thereafter, the
13 nonprofit organization selected to operate the program under
14 subsection (2) of this section shall submit a report to the relevant
15 committees of the legislature and the governor describing:

- 16 (i) The number of affiliate programs established by the program;
17 (ii) The number of children enrolled in each affiliate program;
18 and
19 (iii) The number of children statewide enrolled in the program.

20 (b) The report in this subsection must be submitted in compliance
21 with RCW 43.01.036.

22 (4) (a) The nonprofit organization selected to operate the program
23 under subsection (2) of this section shall provide payment to the
24 national nonprofit foundation under subsection (2) (e) of this section
25 that equals 50 percent of the cost to provide books to eligible
26 children enrolled in the program.

27 (b) Each affiliate program shall provide payment to the program
28 under subsection (2) of this section that equals the remaining cost
29 to provide books to eligible children enrolled in the program.

30 (c) Nothing in this section requires that state funding be
31 provided to the nonprofit organization selected under this subsection
32 or to the program except as provided in subsection (5) of this
33 section.

34 (5) The (~~(department)~~) office of the superintendent of public
35 instruction may seek and accept gifts, grants, or endowments from
36 public or private sources for the program and may spend any gifts,
37 grants, or endowments or income from public or private sources on the
38 program according to their terms.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** RCW 43.216.200 is recodified as a section
2 in chapter 28A.300 RCW.

3 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.300
4 RCW to read as follows:

5 Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this
6 specific purpose, the office of the superintendent of public
7 instruction shall contract with a nonprofit entity experienced in the
8 provision of promoting early literacy for children through pediatric
9 office visits.

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