

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5538

As of February 18, 2005

Title: An act relating to the early childhood education and assistance program.

Brief Description: Moving the early childhood education and assistance program into the office of the superintendent of public instruction.

Sponsors: Senators Prentice, Rockefeller, Doumit, Fairley, McAuliffe, Haugen, Berkey, Rasmussen, Keiser, Regala, Kline, Eide, Kohl-Welles, Brown, Thibaudeau, Franklin, Weinstein, Schmidt and Shin.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education: 2/7/05.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING, K-12 & HIGHER EDUCATION

Staff: Ingrid Mungia (786-7423)

Background: Under current Washington law, the early childhood education and assistance program is administered by the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED). The program assists eligible children with educational, social, health, nutritional and cultural development to enhance their opportunity for success in the common school system.

Summary of Bill: The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) must administer a state-supported early childhood education and assistance program to assist eligible children with educational, social, health, nutritional, and cultural development to enhance their opportunity for success in the common schools system. Administration and funding of the program will shift from CTED to OSPI no later than December 12, 2005. All existing funds and contracts entered into with CTED will remain in full force and be the responsibility of OSPI. All powers, duties and functions of CTED pertaining to the early childhood education and assistance program are transferred to OSPI. The director of financial management must make a determination if a question arises as to the transfer of any property.

A steering committee is established to advise OSPI on the ongoing promotion and operation of the early childhood education and assistance program. This advice must include:

- program standards, which must be guided by appropriate research;
- development of partnerships among providers or early learning programs;
- development of opportunities for professional development; and
- identifying opportunities to build upon existing programs and resources by increasing program quality, connecting related services, and simplifying program administration.

The steering committee must be composed of an appointed accordingly:

- The superintendent of public instruction must appoint two agency employees responsible for policies relating to early learning and assistance to children, one representative of an early childhood education and assistance program provider or contractor and one parent with a child participating in the program. The superintendent must also designate the chair of the steering committee.
- The Secretary of the Department of Social and Health Services must appoint two representatives of that office who are knowledgeable on early learning and assistance to children and one representative of an early childhood education and assistance program provider or contractor.
- The Director of CTED must appoint one representative.
- The Secretary of the Department of Health must appoint one member who is knowledgeable about early learning and pediatric public health issues.

OSPI, in consultation with the steering committee, must adopt rules for the administration of the early childhood program. The rules must require the early childhood programs to provide for parental involvement in participation with their child's program in local program policy decisions, in development and revision of services delivery systems, and parent education and training.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 3, 2005.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Transferring ECEAP to OSPI will help address the achievement gap and get to kids early. The steering committee is a good idea to help build the transition process. The place that focuses on K12 learning can also focus on early learning. Clark County support moving ECEAP to OSPI because they believe OPSI is positioned to be responsible for early learning education.

Testimony Against: The ECEAP is not broke and does not need to be fixed. There is a misconception about what Head Start and ECEAP do. The two programs offer many different programs and assistance to children and their families. There is concern with OSPI taking over early learning because there will be too much focus on education and not on the other two pillars in the program. Teacher development focuses too much on the academic side and not on parent involvement. ECEAP teachers should be required to get a child development degree. There is opposition to the move because more pre-work needs to be done regarding a comprehensive system for early learning.

Who Testified: PRO: Senator Prentice, prime sponsor; Jada Rupley, ESD 112; Dr. Terry Bergeson, OSPI.

CON: Rudy Taylor, Head Start; Ribbin Dunn, Washington State Association of Head Start/ECEAP; Agda Burchard, The Collaborative.