

## Session Wrap-Up: Early Care and Education

Issue Chair: Karen Tvedt  
Contact: ktvedt@lwvwa.org

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Eight early care and education bills we supported were passed by the legislature and sent to the Governor for signature. This includes bills to:

- **Increase timeliness in processing fingerprint background checks** for prospective child care workers (**SB 5774**).
- **Increase access to paid sick leave:** expands the definition of “family member” and allows use of paid sick leave when an employee’s child’s school or place of care is closed due to a public emergency (**SB 5793**).
- **Extend the B&O tax exemption** to include income from the care and education of children up to age 12 (or to age 18 with a verified special need or under court supervision) (**SB 6038**).
- **Adjust billing rules for early intervention services** to count a child as receiving services if provided within the month (**HB 1916**).
- **Allow those eligible for or receiving basic food benefits (SNAP)** to meet the income eligibility requirements for Working Connections Child Care and categorical eligibility for ECEAP (state pre-K) (**HB 1945**).
- **Reorganize and update Working Connections Child Care statutes** (**HB 2111**).
- **Make participation in ECEAP and other designated programs an approved activity** in determining eligibility for Working Connections Child Care. Bill also makes it easier for early care and education workers to get help paying for child care (**HB 2124**).
- **Strengthen the early learning facilities grant and loan program** (**HB 2195**).

**Supplemental Budget:** The budget passed by the legislature provides additional funding for: rate increases for ECEAP (\$8.3 million); infant care rate enhancement (\$6.2 million); nonstandard hour child care bonus (\$772,000); fingerprint background checks (\$254,000); training for early learning providers to effectively work with children with special needs including behavior challenges (\$650,000); coordination between Transition to Kindergarten in schools and local early learning providers (\$1.3 million); early learning facilities (\$26.9 million); access to early learning programs as provided by 2SHB 2124 (\$1.2 million); infant and early mental health consultation (\$1.75 million); contracted professional development support for child care providers (\$2.5 million); and early care and education pilot programs in Snohomish County, Spokane, and for children of construction workers.

Finally, \$533,000 is appropriated for an implementation plan to expand access to Washington's mixed delivery child care system. The plan is to assume family financial contributions capped at no more than seven percent of household income and living wages and benefits for the child care workforce.

**Issues to Watch:** There are several issues we encourage you to watch in early care and education:

- Child care licensing fees were waived during the Covid emergency to help keep child care programs from closing. SB 6038 included a provision that would have authorized the Department of Children, Youth and Families to continue waiving licensing fees. This provision was eliminated from SB 6038 before its final passage. Reinstating licensing fees will be a hardship for an already stressed industry.
- Work is ongoing on a study and proposal to shift state child care payments for at-risk and low income families from reimbursement based on the price of care to paying the full cost of care with workers receiving living wages and benefits. Advocacy organizations anticipate making a major push for this proposal during the 2025 Legislative Session.
- Initiative 2109, proposing a repeal of the Capital Gains Tax, will be on the ballot in November. The first \$500 million of these funds each year goes to child care services. If the initiative were to pass, a major hole would be created in state child care funding.

## How You Can Be Involved

If you have been following these issues (thank you!), do reach out to your senator and representatives to let them know you appreciate the attention given to early care and education in the 2024 Legislative Session. Contact [Karen Tvedt](#), Early Care and Education Issue Chair, if you have questions.