



Senate Budget Protects Child Care funding; ECEAP cut will lead to 29 children losing services

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Joel Ryan, Executive Director of the Washington State Association of Head Start & ECEAP (WSA), called on the Washington State Senate to fully protect funding for the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), which serves over 8000 of Washington's poorest 3 and 4 year old children and their families.

The Senate Ways and Means Committee put together a budget today that mostly protects early learning for at risk children and their families. The proposed budget does not make any cuts to the child care working connections program and largely maintains funding for the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program. However, the budget writers propose a \$193,000 cut to ECEAP which will lead to an additional 29 at risk children and their families losing services across our state.

Joel Ryan, Executive Director of WSA, said the following:

"We are truly grateful that the Senate continues to demonstrate its strong leadership on behalf of Washington's most at risk children. In particular, we are happy that the Senate decided to maintain funding for the child care working connections program and prioritize funding for ECEAP. However, we remain concerned that the Senate is proposing to cut 29 additional children from ECEAP despite the jaw dropping number of children in need of services. This would be on top of the 173 children that were cut in last year's budget."

"As we previously reported, more than 3,500 children are on waiting lists to receive ECEAP services – a more than 263% jump in need in only two years. These families are also experiencing increasing levels of poverty – according to the Department of Early Learning, two-thirds of ECEAP families are at or below 80% of the federal poverty level (\$17,640 for a family of four)."

"Additionally, we want to point out that the policy rationale by the Senate budget writers that any ECEAP cuts would be replaced by Head Start expansion is flawed. On paper the statewide numbers may appear to add up, but on the ground the math simply does not work. Only 4 counties actually received Head Start expansion, but the cuts sustained to ECEAP in last year's budget took place across the state. In just two examples: in Spokane County, Head Start programs did not receive any expansion, but their ECEAP programs were cut by 16 children. In Pierce County there was no Head Start expansion, but ECEAP programs had to cut 54 children from their programs. Continuing this policy will lead to children in one part of the state receiving early childhood services, while other communities will face additional cutbacks."

No Head Start Expansion vs. ECEAP Cuts (21 counties)

- Pierce County (No Head Start expansion and 54 children cut from ECEAP)
- Skagit County (No Head Start expansion and 26 children cut from ECEAP)
- Snohomish County (No Head Start expansion and 18 children cut from ECEAP)
- Spokane County (No Head Start expansion and 16 children cut from ECEAP)
- Mason County (No Head Start expansion and 16 children cut from ECEAP)
- Pacific County (No Head Start expansion and 9 children cut from ECEAP)
- Pend Oreille (No Head Start expansion and 8 children cut from ECEAP)
- Chelan County (No Head Start expansion and 7 children cut from ECEAP)
- Okanogan County (No Head Start expansion and 6 children cut from ECEAP)
- Clark County (No Head Start expansion and 6 children cut from ECEAP)
- Benton County (No Head Start expansion and 5 children cut from ECEAP)
- Asotin, Cowlitz, Ferry, Franklin, San Juan, Stevens, Walla Walla, Whitman, and Yakima counties also received small ECEAP cuts with no corresponding expansion from Head Start.

Received Head Start Expansion vs. ECEAP Cuts (4 counties)

- King County (Received 90 new Head Start slots and 5 children cut from ECEAP)
- Lewis County (Received 40 new Head Start slots and 1 child cut from ECEAP)
- Kitsap County (Received 36 new Head Start slots and 6 children cut from ECEAP)
- Whatcom County (Received 36 new Head Start slots and 2 children cut from ECEAP)

About ECEAP

ECEAP is a comprehensive “whole child”, family-focused preschool program designed to help low-income and at-risk children and families succeed in school and life. ECEAP provides an intensive combination of education, health and nutrition screening and assistance, parent involvement, training and family support, and is considered one of the country’s highest quality state pre-k programs by the National Institute for Early Education Research.

The program was established in 1985, and was modeled after the successful federal Head Start program. It is available to families who earn less than 110% of the Federal Poverty Level (\$23,320/year for a family of four). In 2010 the Washington State Department of Early Learning contracted with 40 schools, child care centers, and community and faith-based facilities to provide ECEAP services to 8,226 children and families.

Studies have shown that at-risk children without high quality preschool were 70% more likely to commit violent crimes, have lower graduation rates and higher drug use. In a 12-year longitudinal study of ECEAP (1988-2000), researchers found that ECEAP children made significantly greater academic gains, displayed more positive behaviors, enjoyed school more, and had fewer health problems than non-ECEAP children.

About WSA

The Washington State Association of Head Start/ECEAP is a statewide organization composed of representatives from ECEAP, Head Start, Early Head Start, Migrant/Seasonal Head Start, and Native American Head Start. The association has been in existence since the late 1960's, and was incorporated as a non-profit organization in 1986. The organization advocates for Head Start and for ECEAP in Olympia and in Washington DC. You can visit our web site at www.wsaheadstarteceap.com.

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