



WSA HAILS PASSAGE OF HB 3168, 'WASHINGTON HEAD START'

Kent, Washington//March 7, 2008/// The Washington Association of Head Start and ECEAP (WSA) Executive Director Joel Ryan applauded today's unanimous Senate passage of HB 3168, the Washington Head Start bill.

The legislation directs the Department of Early Learning (DEL) to develop a plan for implementing an integrated statewide 'Washington Head Start' program that would align the program criteria and performance standards of the state Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) with the federal Head Start program. ECEAP serves more than 7,000 low income children and families in the state of Washington.

House Bill 3168 passed the House of Representatives unanimously on February 13. Both bills will now go to conference to work out the differences. The prime sponsor of the House legislation is Rep. Roger Goodman (D-Kirkland).

In praising the Senate vote today Joel Ryan stated the following:

"We know what works when it comes to providing children with a great start in life—a high quality early childhood education. Reliable studies have consistently found that when taxpayers invest in programs like Head Start they get a return on their investment of at least \$9."

"Children who have been through Head Start are more likely to be ready for school, more likely to graduate from high school, and are less likely to get involved in the juvenile justice system. I am excited that through this landmark legislation we can realize the same benefits we get for Head Start for our state's terrific ECEAP program."

"I want to thank Senate Majority Leader Lisa Brown, Senator Rosemary McAuliffe, Senator Rodney Tom, and Senator Claudia Kauffman for leading the charge in this important effort. This legislation will enable our state's ECEAP program to provide more hours and more services to low income children and families. This will lead to better outcomes and results. This is a huge win for children and for the state of Washington."

Highlights from the Legislation:

Focuses on improving quality by increasing hours

Head Start programs average 530 classroom hours per year while ECEAP averages 360 hours per year. Recent research from the National Institute for Early Education Research at Rutgers University shows that more classroom hours improve outcomes for children.

More intensive services

With additional dollars ECEAP providers will be able to expand services to disabled children, provide more health services, and increase parent involvement and home visiting.

Identify areas of program flexibility needed

In putting together its proposal DEL is directed to work with stakeholders, including ECEAP-only providers, tribes, migrant service providers and other groups to ensure that the things that work well with ECEAP remain in place, and that programs can continue to provide services to local communities in ways that make the most sense and serve their needs.

Increase funding for ECEAP

On average, ECEAP providers receive about \$6,500 per child compared to \$8,700 per child for Head Start providers. Support for the policy goal in SB 3168 must be matched by full funding parity between ECEAP and Head Start. DEL's planning process will include an exploration of the level of funding needed to ensure that ECEAP providers have the funding they need to match Head Start's service levels.

Support Pregnant Women and Infants

Included in the legislation is a requirement that DEL look at developing an Early Head Start program so that young children in the critical birth-to-3 years are able to receive a high quality early learning experience.

Streamline Washington's early learning system

Today, two thirds of ECEAP providers are operated by the same agency that administers Head Start. These agencies have to follow two sets of guidelines, two sets of eligibility rules, and two sets of monitoring reports. By establishing one integrated program, administrative efficiencies will be achieved, and those resources can be used to benefit children and families.

ABOUT WSA

The Washington State Association of Head Start/ECEAP (WSA) is a statewide organization composed of representatives from Head Start, Early Head Start, Migrant Head Start, Native American Head Start and the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP). The association has been in existence since the late 1960's, and was incorporated as a non-profit organization in 1986. To find out more information about WSA go to our web site at www.wsaheadstarteceap.com

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