

Advocates Call for Stabilizing Child Care for Homelessness Children

Cheer First Steps in Extending Homeless Grace Period; Budget Committees to Take Up Bills This Week

Bellevue, WA – Building Changes, Child Care Resources (CCR), and the Washington State Association of Head Start & ECEAP (WSA) applaud the Washington State Legislature’s proposed investment in families experiencing homelessness, as detailed in House Bill 2456 that was passed by the House Human Services & Early Learning Committee on January 24, 2020; and Senate Bill 6351 that passed the Senate Early Learning & K-12 Committee on January 27, 2020. The bills, which are the result of the leadership of Governor Inslee, Representative Callan (5th district) and Senator Nguyen (34th district), concern Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) eligibility. They include a critical provision to extend the homeless grace period for the WCCC subsidy.

Washington State currently allows a “homeless grace period” of up to four months for families experiencing homelessness to meet the full eligibility requirements of WCCC. For 49% of families accessing the grace period, four months is not enough time. The new provision responds to recommendations first laid out by CCR in July 2019, and supported by a coalition of early learning, housing, education and human service organizations. [More than 80 of these advocates have signed onto a letter that was just sent to all members of the Washington State Legislature](#) reinforcing the critical need to move the bills forward and sign into law an extension of the homeless grace period from four to twelve months.

"We applaud the commitment to strengthening and expanding the positive impact of high quality childcare for children experiencing homelessness," WSA Executive Director Joel Ryan said. "This investment will show that Washington State is serious about supporting young children and families experiencing homelessness, and meeting their real needs. Child care is an essential buffer for children experiencing trauma, and the extension will stabilize child care access for homeless families."

Sarah Brady, Early Learning Policy & Advocacy Manager for CCR, said "For the families we work with, their kids are their number 1 priority. But they are competing for child care in a market where child care slots are hard to come by for all families, and only having four months of care sets them at a disadvantage. Child care is critical piece of the puzzle for families working to exit homelessness, and ensuring their kids have nurturing and quality care during the day is the most upstream investment we can make to resolve homelessness. "

Megan Veith, Senior Manager of Policy, Advocacy, and Research at Building Changes, said "For many families experiencing homelessness, 4 months is simply not enough time to find housing and secure childcare. This is especially true across Washington State, where affordable housing and quality childcare openings are scarce. Research shows that quality affordable childcare for families experiencing homelessness provides both short-term and long-term benefits to both the child and the parent. We applaud Washington for taking a big step to holistically support our families experiencing homelessness."

Senate bill 6351, which passed the Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education Committee on January 27th, is expected to be discussed by the Senate Ways & Means Committee on Tuesday February 4th, before being debated on the Senate Floor. The House companion bill HB 2456 is expected to be heard in the House Appropriations Committee on Wednesday.

Building Changes is a statewide organization working to end homelessness for children, youth, and families.

Child Care Resources (CCR) supports families across Washington State and works with child care providers to improve all children's access to high quality early learning experiences, so that they grow up prepared for school and for life.

Washington State Association of Head Start & ECEAP (WSA) provides a strong voice in Olympia and Washington, DC as legislators make decisions that affect low-income children and families.