AB 273 – Subsidized Child Care Eligibility Criteria

SUMMARY

In order to be eligible for state subsidized child care, families are required to meet eligibility requirements for income and need.

AB 273 clarifies English as a Second Language (ESL) classes as an acceptable type of training course for families to qualify for child care eligibility under Title V funded programs.

BACKGROUND

California's Educational Code states that families who meet certain requirements are eligible for federal and state subsidized child development services, such as child care and preschool. The requirements to qualify are based on criteria including income and need of the family.

Under existing law, parents that meet income criteria and are engaged in vocational training courses leading directly to a trade or profession are eligible for state supported child care services. However, courses in English as a Second Language (ESL) and/or High School Equivalency Certificate (HSE) do not qualify as a type of vocational training.

Parents that are taking classes to improve their English language proficiency or working to earn their HSE certificate are taking foundational steps needed to enter vocational training, but currently do not qualify for subsidized child care for their children.

Many families require state supported child care services in order to continue with their education and work towards a profession. Costly child care services may prove burdensome for lower income families, disproportionately impacting single mothers and women of color.

According to the California Budget & Policy Center, in 2015, the average single-mother could expect to spend over two-thirds of her income to cover the cost of child care.

EdSource, a policy and research nonprofit, reports that a lack of access to quality early learning experiences not only widens the achievement gap for children of color, but also contributes to the school-to-prison pipeline.

Additionally, the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) reports that 29% of immigrants in California live in households where no one older than age 13 speaks English "very well." Among immigrants with less than high school diplomas, 67% speak English "not at all" or "not well."

It is well documented that individuals who are proficient in English have higher occupational mobility, with better job prospects and the opportunity to earn higher wages. Parents are also better prepared to support their children as they enter the K-12 system.

Allowing greater access to state child care services for those enrolled in ESL and GED courses promises increased socioeconomic mobility for both parents and their children.

THIS BILL

AB 273 would add ESL and HSE educational programs to the list of eligibility criteria for state subsidized child development services under the California Educational Code.

This bill does not propose to add any additional slots into the child care system. It simply expands the criteria by which a family can qualify to apply.

This change will empower parents to increase their educational level by providing families with greater access to subsidized child care services. It is often challenging for families who are non-native English speakers to access medical services, educational support within school systems, and social services, despite laws that require interpretation. Investing in families as a whole helps reduce poverty and the associated effects on childhood development.

AB 273 would give low-income families greater access to subsidized childcare services by adding enrollment in English as a Second Language (ESL) and High School Equivalency (HSE) Certification Preparation courses to the existing eligibility requirements.

SUPPORT

- Women's Policy Institute

OPPOSITION

None

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