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## WSA Legislative Update, February 23, 2009

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### ***Federal Update***

#### **Economic Recovery Package**

As you are all aware Head Start received a \$2 billion increase as part of the economic stimulus package. The two year funding will be broken up evenly between Head Start and Early Head Start. This means that half of the funding will run through the traditional funding formula, while the Early Head Start funds will be distributed via a competitive process. An RFP for Early Head Start funding will be made available the first week of March.

Head Start was not the only early learning program to receive funding. Funds for early learning will be available through IDEA and Title I and the child care development block grant received an additional \$2 billion. According to calculations made by the Center for Law and Social Policy ([www.clasp.org](http://www.clasp.org)), about \$33 million in new dollars from the child care development block grant will be made available to our state. The Early Learning Action Alliance, of which WSA is a member, will be working to drive the discussion in this area. The coalition hopes to restore some of the proposed cuts to early learning programs in the Governor's budget and have some small chunks of funding left over to move our legislative priorities forward. Legislative staff and DEL are still working to determine the best use of these funds, however, pressure exists to use all or part of these new dollars to support the additional families currently being added to the TANF caseloads as a result of the slumping economy.

#### **2009 Omnibus Bill**

If you recall the traditional appropriations process was shut down before the election. Congressional Democrats and the Bush Administration could not agree on a budget so everyone walked away from the table. This meant that all programs including Head Start and child care are on a CR or continuing resolution. Today, we have been told that the 2009 Omnibus bill is ready to go. An omnibus bill is essentially an effort to stuff all the various funding bills into one very large package. The Omnibus bill is likely to be voted on this week. It includes an increase of \$235 million for Head Start, \$65 million for child care, and \$46 million for the community services block grant. To view the entire bill please go to [http://appropriations.house.gov/FY2009\\_consolidated.shtml](http://appropriations.house.gov/FY2009_consolidated.shtml)

#### **2010 Budget**

President Obama will release the broad outlines of his 2010 fiscal year budget this Thursday. We have not heard how Head Start or early learning will fare in the budget, but Senator Murray's office has let us know that she put additional Head Start funding at the top of her priority requests.

## **Competition Panel Recommendations Out**

The competition panel recommendations are now available for review. The recommendations describe how the Office of Head Start should go about competing the grants of poorly performing programs. In short, they are recommending two broad categories: 1) automatic indicators and 2) key quality indicators.

“Automatic Indicators” are those in which an occurrence would automatically require a grantee to compete for renewal, and “Key Quality Indicators” are where a pattern of poor performance in multiple areas would require a grantee to compete for renewal of their Head Start grant. Based on these Indicators, a clear threshold will be determined for renewal of the Head Start grant.

These recommendations now go to the Secretary of HHS/Office of Head Start who will then formulate rules/regulations and place them in the federal register. After they are placed in the federal register WSA and our membership will have 90 days to provide comments. It is not clear when the proposed rules will be available because the Obama Administration has not appointed anyone to HHS and the Office of Head Start remains in limbo. To view the proposed recommendations please go to:

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/Program%20Design%20and%20Management/Head%20Start%20Requirements/Renewal%20of%20Head%20Start%20Grantees/RenewalofHeadS.htm>

If you are interested in being part of a work group on this issue and helping WSA craft recommendations please e-mail Joel at [Joel@wsaheadstarteceap.com](mailto:Joel@wsaheadstarteceap.com)

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## ***State Update: WSA Advocacy Goals***

### **ECEAP**

At the moment ECEAP is still in the safe zone and WSA is doing everything we can to remind lawmakers of the importance of this critical program, especially during an economic downturn. However, as I am sure you are already aware the budget forecast continues to get worse. We now have a budget deficit of more than \$8 billion. If you are an ECEAP director, work for the program, or a parent, now is a good time to contact your lawmaker and remind them about the importance of ECEAP and what the program does for children and families.

### **Child Care Subsidies**

The child care subsidies reform bill passed out of the House Early Learning and Children’s Services Committee last week. The bill (H1754) was altered in the committee due to the mounting budget deficit in the state. The new legislation requires the Department of Early Learning and the Department of Social and Health Services to come up with a plan by December 2009 regarding how to reform the child care subsidy system. The plan must include ways to phase in a 12 month eligibility recertification process, to cap-copayments at 10 percent, and to allow programs more flexibility with child absences. To view the legislation please go to <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=1754&year=2009>

### **Early Learning in Basic Education Definition**

Both the House and Senate bills that would have included early learning in the definition of basic education are dead. According to many reports the legislation stalled as a result of strong opposition by the WEA. WSA is continuing to work with its partners to revive the concept and we are hopeful that we can make some progress before the end of the session. One positive

sign is that Senator Eric Oemig and Rep. Pat Sullivan have both introduced stripped down bills in the hope that something could be accomplished by the end of the legislative session.

### **Home Visiting**

WSA continues to fight to restore the Governor's proposed cuts to Home Visiting funding within the Council for Children and Families. The issue has a lot of champions in Olympia and this issue remains a top priority of the full Early Learning Action Alliance coalition. Related to this topic Rep. Ruth Kagi put together a briefing featuring Professor Pat Leavitt from Vanderbilt University. The presentation by Professor Leavitt was focused on the impact of adverse stress on child development. Dr. Leavitt testified in favor of maintaining funding for home visiting programs along with Cathy Garland, WSA Board Chair.

Rep. Kagi has also introduced a bill that would move funding for home visiting to the Department of Early Learning in an effort to save the program, even if the Council for Children and Families cannot be spared. We are hopeful that home visiting funding and the Council for Children and Families will be spared the budget axe.

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## ***State Update: Other Key Pieces of Legislation***

### **Professional Development**

A key priority for the Early Learning Action Alliance is House bill 1943. The effort is being spearheaded by our friends at WAEYC. The legislation would better focus the Department of Early Learning's work on professional development. The bill passed out of the House Early Learning and Children's Services Committee. To view a copy of this legislation please go to <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=1943&year=2009>

### **Kindergarten Readiness Assessment**

Rep. Ruth Kagi has introduced House bill 1944 that builds upon the kindergarten readiness assessment report. The legislation passed out of the House Early Learning and Children's Services Committee last week. To view this bill please go to <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=1944&year=2009>

### **Early Learning Advisory Council**

Senator Claudia Kauffman has introduced legislation to strengthen the Early Learning Advisory Council. The legislation passed out of the Senate Early Learning and K-12 Committee last week. WSA is working with Senator Kauffman and will work with House staff to improve the legislation when and if the bill passes in the Senate. To view the bill please go to <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=5617&year=2009>

### **Cut-Off for Policy Bills**

Because lawmakers are interested in getting to work early on the budget, policy bills have to be voted out of their respective committees even earlier than in the past. The House cut-off is Friday February 20<sup>th</sup> and the Senate cut-off is February 25<sup>th</sup>.

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## ***New Department of Early Learning Director Named***

Dr. Bette Hyde will be the new Director of the Department of Early Learning starting in April. Bette is the superintendent of the 5,500-student Bremerton School District, well-known for its emphasis on partnering with local early learning groups to improve kindergarten readiness. She began her career as a special education teacher, and has worked as a school psychologist, principal and assistant superintendent in the Seattle, Vashon Island and Highline school districts. Hyde worked as deputy superintendent for Puget Sound Educational Services District. She also served on the governor's Washington Learns advisory committee.

Hyde earned her doctorate from the University of Minnesota, and completed a post-doctorate administrative certification from the University of Washington. To view the full announcement from the Department of Early Learning please go to <http://www.del.wa.gov/resources/newsroom/021009.aspx>

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