



WSA Washington State Association of Head Start & ECEAP

*Serving ECEAP, Head Start, Migrant Head Start,
Tribal Head Start and Early Head Start
Programs and Families*



For Immediate Release: January 13, 2012
Contact: Joel Ryan, 253.486.9077, joel@wsaheadstarteceap.com

4,000 Working Families to Lose Child Care, Will Expand Welfare Rolls and Cost Taxpayers More

Governor Chris Gregoire is proposing to cut 4,000 families off of the Working Connections Child Care program as part of the [budget she unveiled in December](#). This is a \$50 million cut to a program that helped thousands of families move from welfare to work.

On Thursday, January 12, the House Health and Human Services Appropriations Committee held a hearing to examine Gov. Gregoire's proposal. The hearing focused on the Governor's proposed reductions to TANF as well as the Working Connections Child Care program.

The state's Working Connections Child Care program provides a small subsidy to working families to help pay for child care. Currently, there are almost 30,000 families enrolled in the program.

"As a child care provider, I work with parents every day to make sure that they can go to work while their children are cared for in a safe, learning-focused environment," says **Marie Keller, a child care provider in Everett and member of SEIU 925**. "These cuts have a ripple effect: with parents being forced to quit their jobs and therefore unable to afford child care, small businesses like mine have to lay off employees or close down. In these tough economic times, we need to support Working Connections so parents can keep their jobs and their children can access high-quality early learning programs."

At the hearing two parents that rely on child care subsidies offered testimony about the detrimental impact of the potential cuts. [Click here to see their testimony](#).

- **Nicole Matthews, Kent**, is a domestic violence survivor and single mother of two who attends school full time (one quarter left to receive her paralegal degree) and works two part time jobs. She depends on Working Connections to provide a safe place for her children while she gets the education and work experience she needs to make a better life for them in the future. [Written testimony pdf](#)
- **Bianca Bailey, Ellensburg**, also relies on WCCC. As the Administrative Assistant at the Ellensburg food bank, Bianca is able to support her family without other state assistance with the help of Working Connections, pay taxes and contribute to the economy, and demonstrate a strong work ethic to her children. [Written testimony pdf](#).

Other parents from around the state also submitted written testimony of participation in Working Connections. [Click here for their stories.](#)

The Early Learning Action Alliance (ELAA), a coalition of more than 40 organizations in Washington State is opposing the cuts to the Working Connections Child care program. ELAA believes the proposal will mean more families will end up having to quit their jobs because of the inability to afford safe child care and maintain their employment. While the Governor's proposal may appear to save money it actually will lead to greater costs as the welfare rolls expand.

Here's what two ELAA organizations had to say:

"The Working Connections Child Care program has helped thousands of families move from welfare to work as part of welfare reform. But the Governor is looking at unraveling that. Her proposal would turn an exceptional welfare to work program to a work to welfare program—something we cannot afford in a time of tight budgets and a continuing recession." **Joel Ryan, Executive Director, WSA**

"While Working Connections is considered a work support program, it is also an early learning program for our some of Washington's most at-risk children. High-quality early learning ensures that kids are ready for school and can benefit from life's many opportunities. We know that a big part of quality is stability for a child during these critical years of development. Cutting child care subsidies means that many families will have no choice but to remove their child from their child care situation, only to have to look for other options when they qualify for cash assistance and search for work. The result is a higher cost to the state and disruption for kids and families at a time when they are most in need of steady, consistent care." **Jon Gould, Deputy Director, Children's Alliance**

For more information about the Working Connections Child Care program, visit: <http://www.del.wa.gov/care/help/connections.aspx>

About WSA

The Washington State Association of Head Start/ECEAP (WSA) 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