

Summary Discussion - HB 372

Bill Motivation:

[HB372](#) would ease staffing turnover/shortage struggles experienced by ECCE providers by facilitating access to a substitute pool that could help stabilize access to ECCE services for families. [Virginia](#) ECCE providers struggle with a 38% turnover rate for lead teachers, and 49% for assistant teachers at child care centers, jeopardizing their ability to keep classrooms open and operating to serve families with reliable quality child care.

Bill Intention:

HB372 would create a grant program, administered by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) and make available competitively for existing and prospective providers and/or groups of providers, to create an efficient and effective substitute pool, staffed with qualified substitutes and in compliance with the necessary background checks.

Bill History:

HB372, introduced by Delegate Marty Martinez in the 2024 General Assembly, was considered by the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Elementary and Secondary Education Committee and recommended (voice vote) to be continued to the 2025 session and referred to the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Commission for further consideration.

Context and Background:

Generally, the concept behind a state's substitute pool program is to help recruit and train individuals interested in serving as substitutes to become qualified and available across the state.

- In the case of Washington state's statewide subsidy pool program (ostensibly the first state-funded program) to incentivize recruitment of substitutes, potential candidates receive training at no cost to them. All licensed providers can access Washington's substitute pool. Substitutes are available to licensed providers at no cost to them if they meet eligibility requirements. Providers also have the option to privately pay for substitutes. The Washington Department of Children, Youth, and Families supports the cost of substitute coverage as funding is available. To qualify as a substitute, candidates must complete required training and a portable background check process.

Substitute pools can be a vital solution for keeping ECCE classrooms staffed to continue operating and meet required teacher/child ratios in instances of regular staff absences and

short-term vacancies. However, few states currently have a substitute pool program, and research on those states' implementation is still ongoing.

Considerations:

Funding/Cost

- A fiscal impact analysis was not provided for HB 372; however, Delegate Martinez proposed a budget amendment of [\\$45 million](#) to form the Child Care Implementation and Substitute Employee Pool. The budget amendment was not included in the final budget as adopted.
- The state of Washington [appropriated](#) \$250,000 (state general funds) each year in FY25 and FY26 for the substitute pool initiative administered by the Imagine Institute, which provides substitutes for both home- and center-based programs.

System Changes

- If enacted, a streamlined portal/application system and requirements including portable background checks could be created and administered by VDOE

Impact

Children and Families

- Child care services could be more reliable and available, minimizing interruptions to children's learning and parents' workforce participation.

ECCE Providers and Educators

- Providers could more easily maintain ratio compliance and remain open when regular staff are absent.
- ECCE teachers could have more flexibility to take time away for vacations, sick days, family leave, or professional development/continuing education and therefore potentially decrease burnout and stress, increasing retention of quality ECCE teachers.

State Approaches to Substitute Pool

Mississippi partnered with [Wonderschool](#) in 2023 to create a [sub pool](#) with streamlined requirements and flexible hours for both providers and the substitutes themselves. For Mississippi, this program provided a 70% job match rate, finding suitable situations for both substitutes and childcare programs. One-third of all licensed childcare providers in the state joined the substitute pool within the first few months of operation. Over 3,500 applications were received, showing high interest in substitute roles.

In **Washington** state, [The Imagine Institute](#), a professional development non-profit, provides multiple services and functions for the childcare industry, including maintaining the statewide substitute pool. The pool provided substitutes covering [70,000 hours](#) of care/ECCE services in participating sites in FY2022.

Examples of the [functions and responsibilities](#) of Washington's substitute pool include:

- Roles and Responsibilities
 - **Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF):** uphold regulations within Substitute portal, such as background checks, reimbursements, maintain qualifications standards for both the facilities and substitutes, manage Substitute Pool Administrators
 - **Substitute Pool Administrator (Imagine Institute):** act as a recruiter, customer service, deliver orientations to DCYF standards, verify qualifications, manage participation, manage and maintain the pool software, act as employer/contractor for substitutes, collect facility payments for substitute work, schedule substitute work as needed, maintain Substitute Pool software data
- An online portal was created to maintain quality among substitutes and allow them to express interest and skills. The Substitute Pool software matches vacancies (needs of the facilities) to the skills of a substitute (e.g., a facility indicates a need for a Spanish-speaking substitute). The program will match a substitute based on their skills and ability to be there in time for service.
- Facilities may indicate their interest in joining the Substitute Pool at any time, but they must meet the qualifications to join.

Oregon's [Child Care Substitutes of Oregon](#) (CCSO) is maintained by [The Research Institute](#) at Western Oregon University. Established in 2022, the Child Care Substitute Program recruits, screens, trains, and hires substitutes for childcare programs that register with CCSO. Eligible programs include Registered Family, Certified Family, Certified Center, and Certified School-Age Centers. Programs can receive up to 50 hours of state-funded hours of the substitute's time, with the option of centers purchasing more hours being explored. A job matching program is available through [Childcarematters.com](#), which offers jobs out to substitutes in the region, offering scheduling flexibility and choice for substitutes.

Montana's [program](#) is run by Raise Montana, with a portal and flexible scheduling through [Childcarematters.com](#), where payment systems directly are set and paid by the program themselves.

Rhode Island's Service Employees International Union (SEIU) collaborated with government entities and Carina Care to create a substitute pool to serve in family child care homes. Rhode Island Association of Education of Young Children's (RIAEYC) TEACH program, which allows ECCE teachers to further their education, is also creating a substitute pool.

Additional Resources

<https://blog.wonderschool.com/articles/case-study-addressing-child-care-staff-shortages-in-mississippi-through-strategic-partnership>

<https://imaginewa.org/find-a-substitute/#subpool-eligibility>

<https://www.oregon.gov/delc/providers/pages/starting-and-expanding-your-business.aspx>

<https://www.raisemt.org/substitutes>

https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/user-73607/naeyc_benefits_brief.may_2024.pdf (*Page 15 discusses substitute pools*)

<https://blog.wonderschool.com/articles/case-study-addressing-child-care-staff-shortages-in-mississippi-through-strategic-partnership>