2008 Legislative Session Review: Keep Our Promises to Kids

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The 2008 Legislative Session was marked by caution. Although Washington State had a projected short-term surplus of over a billion dollars in January, a slowdown in the national economy and a slight downturn in the forecasted surplus for Washington State prompted the governor and legislators to focus on securing ample rainy day funds over making new investments.

In this environment, the Children’s Alliance went into the legislative session advocating for targeted investments to improve opportunities for children and families around the state. In the end, we succeeded in winning significant victories for children in foster care, coupled with small but concrete steps forward in the areas of early learning, ending hunger and children’s health care.

During the legislative session we drew on our capacity to mobilize people around the state, worked with community partners and coalition members and engaged the media. The Children’s Alliance maintains a full-time presence in Olympia to track bills and budget items, meet with legislators and testify in hearings to build bi-partisan support.

Our Children’s Action Network is 8,842 members strong and during the 2008 session grew by 402 members. During this session our members sent over 7,800 emails to lawmakers advocating for legislation and investments supporting children and their families. The Children’s Alliance also sent 20 Media Digests to keep subscription members current on the issues they care about. In addition, in January we launched the Spanish version of our online Action Center and sent our first Spanish language action alert.

On January 31st, despite snow closing the passes from Eastern Washington, hundreds of parents, children and advocates gathered on the steps of the Capitol as part of our annual Have a Heart for Kids Day. Their message: “Keep our promises to kids.” Governor Chris Gregoire honored the work of the Children's Alliance and reiterated her commitment to meeting the needs of children during her pre-rally speech.

The Children’s Alliance 2008 Legislative Agenda focused on asking legislators to keep their promises to kids by securing investments for foster care, early learning, anti-hunger strategies and children’s health.

Going into the supplemental budget session the state had a healthy ending fund balance of over a billion dollars. However, midway through session the revenue forecast took a downturn causing the Governor and legislative leaders to focus on keeping $900 million in reserve. This put a damper on many of the Children’s Alliance legislative agenda items.

The Children’s Alliance 2008 Legislative Agenda focused on asking legislators to keep their promises to kids by securing investments for foster care, early learning, anti-hunger strategies and children’s health.

Foster Care

This session the Children’s Alliance called on lawmakers to invest the $10 million needed to adequately fund sibling visitations, comprehensive Child Health Education and Tracking (CHET) screens, educational support and other critical improvements. We needed strong allies in the legislature to get these funding requests into the budget and thanks to our supporters, we did. Both Representative Ruth Kagi and Representative Roger Goodman were influential in ensuring that this was a priority for the House of Representatives. House Speaker Frank Chopp also played a critical role in ensuring that this was a top budget priority for the House. In the end, the final budget included over $9 million of our priority investments for youth in foster care. However, to our disappointment, $943,000 for educational
supports for foster youth was vetoed by the Governor.

Early Learning

On the early learning front we called on lawmakers to invest an additional $5 million in quality home visiting programs. In 2007 lawmakers included a $3.5 million down payment for evidence-based home visiting services to strengthen support for parents as their children’s first teachers. However, demand for home visiting programs in our state is much greater, particularly for low-income children and children of color. While home visiting didn’t receive increased funding this year, steps were taken to increase policymakers’ awareness and understanding of these important investments, which will help lay the groundwork for next session. Legislators did pass House Bill 3168 requiring a study of how to best align the current state pre-k program (Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program or ECEAP) with the federally funded Head Start program.

Ending Hunger

We called on lawmakers to invest $4 million to eliminate the school lunch co-pay in pre-K and grades 4 through 12. In 2007 lawmakers made a down payment on the promise of school meals when they eliminated the co-pay that some low-income children paid for school lunch. But allocated funds were enough only to eliminate the co-pay in grades K through 3. While this year’s supplemental budget did not include the $4 million in requested investments, coalitions and partnerships grew stronger and efforts are already underway to renew the request for the 2009 Legislative Session.

Children’s Health

The Children’s Alliance worked in collaboration with our Health Coalition for Children and Youth (HCCY) members to maintain and defend the Cover All Kids Law passed in 2007. The law makes affordable, comprehensive health coverage available to every child in the state. This session we called on lawmakers to fulfill the promise of the law and maintain their commitment to covering all kids by 2010. We also wanted to educate lawmakers about needed investments in the medical home model. The medical home funding was not included in the 2008 supplemental budget; however, the Legislature did invest in other programs and policies that can help improve the health of children.

Additional Results

While the Children’s Alliance agenda this session focused on budget items, we actively supported other issues that hold the promise of improving the lives of children.

The Children’s Alliance played an active role in supporting the Toxic Free Legacy Coalition in the passage of our nation’s most comprehensive legislation to keep toxins out of toys and children’s products, the Childrens’ Safe Products Bill (HB 2647).

Local Farms/Healthy Kids (SB 6483) allows schools to purchase fresh food from local farms, provides funding to support Washington farmers and increases access to fresh and local fruits and vegetables in schools, food banks and farmers markets. In addition, the gross income limit was raised in the Food Stamp Program (Basic Food).

The Working Families Tax Credit (SB 6809) is a new law that will provide a tax rebate to families in Washington who access the federal Earned Income Tax Credit. It builds on this successful poverty reduction program and brings our state one step closer to an equitable tax system. Washington will be the first state without a state income tax to create this type of program.

Resources

Children’s Alliance
www.childrensalliance.org

Detailed Bill Information
www.leg.wa.gov

Parent Resources
www.parenthelp123.org
Foster Care Summary

This legislative session we called on lawmakers to invest more than $10 million to improve the safety and stability of youth in foster care. We were encouraged to see many of these and other foster care and child welfare investments passed by the Legislature. These critical investments will help ensure that all foster children are seen by a caseworker every thirty days, that they get a health and education screening within 30 days of coming into care and that they are able to visit their siblings if they have to be separated from them. In the end more than $9 million of investments were included in the final budget. We are disappointed, however, that the Governor vetoed investments for improving the educational outcomes for youth in foster care before she signed the budget bill.

Background

In 2004, the state settled a long-running foster care lawsuit, Braam v. State of Washington, and created an independent oversight panel to oversee the implementation of the settlement agreement and provide regular progress reports.

From these reports, we know that the tragedy of foster children being separated from their siblings has not been decreasing, despite legislation passed in 2007 mandating regular visits for siblings placed apart from each other. In addition, foster parent survey data (prepared by Washington State University for the Department of Social and Health Services) indicated that fewer than half of siblings were able to visit each other more than once a month—nearly 10% of respondents reported that children in their care were seeing siblings “not at all.”

Reports also showed that as of June 2006, despite the fact that timely health and education screenings are required by a Washington State law passed in 1993, DSHS was completing timely Child Health and Education Screens (CHET) for fewer than 30% of children. The settlement agreement in the Braam lawsuit set the goal of a 90% compliance rate by June 2006.
We also know that foster children don’t get the educational support they need in school. In Washington State, seven out of ten foster youth do not graduate from high school before they age-out of foster care and only 25% of all foster youth enroll in post-secondary programs immediately after high school. In a 2001 report, 40% of foster kids screened in Washington performed below their grade level, compared to 20% of all children.

These discouraging numbers were summed up in one message to lawmakers: Foster kids can’t wait.

**What Happened**

The Children’s Alliance 2008 Legislative Agenda called on lawmakers to invest $10 million in critical investments for children in foster care. With a worsening budget outlook, we knew we would need a big advocacy push to achieve our goal. Along with our partners we were adamant that children in foster care get what they deserve even if the state budget was tight. We asked the Legislature to fund reforms that were consistent with the outcomes directed by the Braam Oversight Panel.

A $10 million request is a large one and we were hopeful that the Legislature would prioritize these issues, even in tough budget times. We needed strong allies in the Legislature to get these funding requests approved. Both Representatives Ruth Kagi and Rodger Goodman were very influential in ensuring that this was a priority for the House of Representatives.

Speaker Frank Chopp also played a critical role in ensuring that this was a top budget priority for the House. When the House budget was released it was clear that advocacy had worked; investments in foster kids totaled more than $7 million.

We were hopeful that the Senate budget would include these investments as well, but we were disappointed. Although the Senate did invest in foster care issues in other ways, they did not fund Children’s Alliance requests. We worked alongside our partners to ensure that the final budget would include investments that would improve the lives of foster kids. The Legislature’s final Supplemental Budget did include more than $10 million in investments for foster kids; however, we were disappointed in the Governor’s veto of $943,000 in educational investments for youth in foster care before she signed the budget into law.

**Next Steps**

During this interim we will work with our partners to ensure the over $9 million in investments are implemented in ways that best serve the health and stability of youth in foster care. In addition, we will continue to serve on the advisory committee on Racial Disproportionality to review disparities in Washington State’s child welfare system and develop recommendations to create an equitable system that serves all communities. A report offering essential research and recommendations to help inform the work of the Committee and other efforts across the country should be released this fall.
Early Learning Summary

For our Early Learning 2008 Legislative Agenda we called on lawmakers to invest an additional $5 million in quality home visiting programs. In the end, this year’s Supplemental Budget did not include additional funding for home-visiting programs. Policymakers did make other early learning investments. Policymakers included $250,000 for a study on implementation of Washington Head Start in our state, an effort that will align our state’s pre-K program with federal standards.

Washington continued its progress with the Thrive-by-Five demonstration communities, investing $2 million of capital funds for the construction of the Greenbridge Early Learning Center in White Center and $100,000 for the East Yakima Early Learning center. The Legislature also included a study to make kindergarten assessment recommendations for future implementation.

Background

This supplemental budget session followed on the heels of $130 million in new investments in early learning in last year’s biennial budget. One year earlier, in 2006, the Legislature created an executive-level agency, the Department of Early Learning (DEL), and formed a public-private partnership, called Thrive by Five, to build public will and financial support for early learning.

Since summer of 2006, the Children’s Alliance has been convening early learning advocates with the goal of creating a strong, strategic and effective presence in state-level policy. The Early Learning Advocates Table continues to both expand its reach and focus its efforts as we work to identify our long term vision, goals and shared policy advocacy so that children in Washington have every opportunity to succeed in school and life.

What Happened

During session, the Children’s Alliance and the Collaborative co-convened weekly meetings in Olympia to share information and help coordinate early learning advocacy. The Children’s Alliance also held a weekly conference call to update and connect advocates in the field. While it was a challenging year for funding we were encouraged by a high turnout at the early learning and afterschool caucus during our annual Have a Heart for Kids advocacy day in Olympia. It was the most well-attended policy caucus of our advocacy day.

While our requested increase of $5 million for evidence-based home visiting programs was not included in the Supplemental Budget, important steps in increasing policymaker awareness and understanding of home visiting programs will help lay the groundwork for future investments. Here are some of the other investments for early learning:

Home visiting services have been proven to help children be ready for kindergarten, dramatically reduce child abuse and neglect and provide an extremely high return on investment to taxpayers.

–Fight Crime: Invest in Kids

Photo credit Tegra Stone Nuess
learning in the 2008 Supplemental Budget:

**House Bill 3168** requires a study about implementation of Washington Head Start, an effort designed to align the current state pre-K program (Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program or ECEAP) with the federally funded Head Start. This legislation calls for recommendations for implementation and alignment of the two programs by December 2009.

The Legislature also approved $150,000 for the Department of Early Learning, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and Thrive by Five Washington to present recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature regarding implementation of a statewide kindergarten entry assessment by December 15, 2008.

The Legislature allocated $120,000 in matching funds to encourage private investment for existing local early learning system coalitions. These funds are to be used to:

- Increase communities’ ability to implement their business plans for comprehensive local and regional early learning systems
- Involve parents in their children’s education
- Enhance coordination between early learning and K-12 systems
- Improve training and support for raising the level of child care givers’ professional skills

Other early learning items to note this year include funds in the capital budget for construction and acquisition of facilities in Thurston County and the early learning demonstration communities of White Center and East Yakima. A statewide child care facilities needs assessment, funding for child care safety positions at the Department of Early Learning (DEL) and funds for legal billing costs were all included in the supplemental budget.

For a summary of early learning investments this year, please see our [Budget Summary](#).

**Next Steps**

The 2008 session had a few small steps for our earliest learners, but there is a lot of work to do in the year ahead to make sure that our early learning system makes large strides to support the highest potential for children birth to five.

The Children’s Alliance will continue convening the [Early Learning Advocates Table](#), a broad set of advocates, as we work to:

- Develop and implement a long-term policy advocacy vision and plan for a high quality early learning system in Washington.
- Build support for early learning in the 2009 Legislative Session.

**Resources**

- Children’s Alliance
  [www.childrensalliance.org](http://www.childrensalliance.org)
- Detailed Bill Information
  [www.leg.wa.gov](http://www.leg.wa.gov)
- Parent Resources
  [www.parenthelp123.org](http://www.parenthelp123.org)
- WA Association of Head Start and ECEAP
  [www.wsaheadstarteceap.com/legislative_updates.html](http://www.wsaheadstarteceap.com/legislative_updates.html)
End Childhood Hunger Summary

The Children’s Alliance End Childhood Hunger legislative request was for $4 million to eliminate the co-pay for reduced-price school lunches for pre-kindergarten and grades 4 through 12. Despite strong supporting evidence, inclusion in the Superintendent of Public Instruction’s budget request and a number of informed legislative champions, these investments were not included in the 2008 Supplemental Budget. Efforts are already underway to renew the request for the 2009 Legislative Session.

Background

Childhood hunger continues to be a serious problem in Washington. The latest USDA-Census Bureau survey of food insecurity and hunger reported that 251,000 households in Washington struggle to put food on the table due to lack of resources. We estimate that 300,000 children live in these families. Hungry children may be more lethargic and/or aggressive, get sick more often than other children and miss more school.

A set of policy changes and state investments beginning in 2004 have strengthened school meal programs and resulted in increased participation by low-income children. Based on the successful 2006 campaign to eliminate the co-pay for reduced-price school breakfasts, the Children’s Alliance and partners including the Washington School Nutrition Association pushed for elimination of the lunch co-pay in 2007. The Legislature invested in eliminating the lunch co-pay for Kindergarten through 3rd grade but left the job unfinished. The elimination of the “co-pay” for pre-K and grades 4 through 12 would boost the number of children eating a healthy lunch by an estimated 12,500 low-income students and return about $4.6 million in added federal funds to school districts.

What Happened

With the support of the Anti-Hunger and Nutrition Coalition and many others, funds were requested to extend the elimination of the co-pay for school lunch to pre-K and grades 4 through 12. The price tag to finish this job was $4 million in the 2008 Supplemental Budget.

Legislative champions from 2007 renewed their interest: Representative Joe McDermott carried the issue with him when he was appointed to a Senate seat in the fall; new House champions included Representative Pat Sullivan.

The Washington School Nutrition Association organized one-on-one meetings with legislators, holding nearly 100 meetings since the fall of 2007. The Anti-Hunger and Nutrition Coalition’s Hunger Action Day in February coordinated constituent visits with nearly all the members of the House and Senate budget committees. Superintendent of Public Instruction Terry Bergeson included the $4 million in her supplemental budget request, a first for the coalition backing increased access to school meals. Endorsers also included the Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA), Washington State School Directors Association (WSSDA), Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP), Washington State Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and School Nurses of Washington (SNOW).
The request, however, ran up against Governor Gregoire’s strong stance against new state spending. Ultimately, the investments were not included in her budget, nor in the House or Senate budgets. The strong supporting coalition, most likely with additional allies, will be back in 2009 to continue to press for elimination of the co-pay for school lunches for all students. Our case will be strengthened with additional data on the impact of eliminating the co-pay this school year for K-3.

Although the Children’s Alliance’s primary child nutrition request was not funded, the Legislature approved two significant initiatives that make great progress on our goal to end childhood hunger in Washington:

Local Farms/Healthy Kids: (SSB 6483) This comprehensive package changes state purchasing rules to allow schools to purchase from local farms. It also increases acceptance of food stamps at farmers markets and provides additional vouchers to low-income seniors and families to purchase fresh food at farmers’ markets—increasing access to fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables. These investments totaled $1.5 million.

Raising the gross income limit in the Food Stamp Program (Basic Food): In 2000, Oregon increased the gross income limit for eligibility to receive food stamps, and has seen a significant increase in applicants and equally significant drops in food insecurity and hunger. This year we were successful in raising the gross income limit for food stamps in Washington state, and gaining the increased investments for the additional staff that will be needed to implement the change at local offices. The change is funded through investments of $1.1 million from the state general fund and $850,000 in federal funds. DSHS will implement the new eligibility limit in October 2008. We anticipate that the policy change will result in 23,000 new households receiving food stamps in Washington.

Representative Eric Pettigrew championed both of these investments. Senator Brian Hatfield sponsored the Local Farms/Healthy Kids bill in the Senate. Senate Majority Leader Lisa Brown, recognizing the economic stimulus impact of the food stamp program, championed inclusion of funds to raise the gross income limit in the Senate budget.

Next Steps

The coalition supporting the elimination of the school lunch co-pay for all reduced-price students is already discussing plans to reintroduce the request for the 2009-2011 budget. The strong work done by coalition members this session will guide the development of 2009 strategies. Successes this year included soliciting endorsements of the request from a broad range of players in the education field which will be the starting point for work prior to the 2009 Legislative Session.

Monitoring of the Local Farms/Healthy Kids initiative will be essential. Funding for this legislation is spread across five state departments: Department of Agriculture, Department of General Administration, Department of Social and Health Services, Department of Health and Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Advocates will need to be vigilant in reinforcing the comprehensive policy goals: ensuring increased access to healthy foods for low-income children.

Discussions with DSHS concerning implementation of changes in the food stamp program have already started. A meeting of stakeholders will be convened that will discuss implementation strategies including technology, outreach and implications for local offices.

Resources

Children’s Alliance
www.childrensalliance.org

Local Farms, Healthy Kids
www.environmentalpriorities.org

Food Stamp Expansion
www.childrensalliance.org

Detailed Bill Information
www.leg.wa.gov

Parent Resources
www.parenthelp123.org
Children’s Health Summary

In 2008, the Children’s Alliance worked in collaboration with our Health Coalition for Children and Youth (HCCY) members to maintain and defend the Cover All Kids Law, which was passed in 2007. The law makes affordable, comprehensive health coverage available to every child in the state. This year we asked lawmakers to fulfill the promise of the law and maintain their commitment to covering kids to ensure we reach the goal of having all children covered by 2010.

Background

This year the Children’s Alliance supported policies and investments necessary to realize the goal of covering all kids and promoting access to health coverage and a medical home by the year 2010. While we continue to applaud our state’s law, we know that there is much implementation work to be done to reach our goal.

In early 2007, the Children’s Alliance and HCCY members identified the various components of the Cover All Kids law that would require ongoing advocacy and strong partnerships with the state agencies in charge of implementing the law. Multiple implementation committees were established with the state agencies to develop policy changes and Legislative reports that document the implementation efforts and strategies for achieving our goals.

Throughout 2007, the HCCY members played a key role in convening and recommending policy changes to the implementation workgroups at the state level – from Outreach and Enrollment, to designing a Medical Home model for children. These reports were submitted to the Legislature just prior to the 2008 session. The Medical Home report unveiled the policies and investments necessary over a five-year span to improve access to providers and high quality services for children. The outreach report informed Legislators about the community contracts set into place in each county, and the outreach strategies on the horizon that would help educate families, enroll children, and incorporate year-round health promotion messages.

In preparation for the 2008 Legislative Session, we developed a Cover All Kids Implementation Summary for legislators and community stakeholders. The report highlights the strategies and plans for successful implementation and identifies the essential next steps. The Children’s Alliance and HCCY advocated that one of the critical next steps to improving access is to fund the evidence-based medical home recommendations included in the Medical Home report.

What Happened

Heading into session, our children’s health priority was to ensure that the investments necessary to fulfill the promise of the Cover All Kids law would be included in the 2008 Supplemental Budget. HCCY developed a 2008 Legislative Agenda to push for secure investments in the medical home model. We also continued to advocate for a commitment to fund outreach and enrollment in the 2009 session.

Early in the Legislative Session, a joint Health Care Committee Work Session was held on the Medical Home report for children. HCCY member Kirsten Wysen
and HCCY chair Dr. John Neff presented with our partners at the Department of Social and Health Services about the importance of building a state-wide health improvement system to increase access to high-quality medical care for children. Dr. Neff and Ms. Wysen presented on the HCCY 2008 legislative agenda components, research on best practices, and recommended priority investments for 2009 to promote better access to providers and health services for children in Washington.

While the medical home funding was not included in the 2008 Supplemental Budget, the Legislature did make a few significant down payments on crucial programs and policies that can help improve the health of Washington’s children. Community organizations throughout Washington championed these priorities to promote the health of children and families in our state.

The Legislature passed the Health Insurance Information for Students bill (SB 5100). This law will pilot collaborative projects in six school districts to provide health insurance information to students when they enroll in school and link uninsured children to affordable health coverage. This is a critical step to help get every child covered by 2010 and has the power to enhance the outreach and enrollment efforts around the state.

The 2008 Supplemental Budget included an additional $1.25 million in the Health Professional Scholarship and Loan Repayment program. This program provides financial support to healthcare professions employed or seeking employment in clinics that serve a disproportionate number of uninsured patients in underserved areas of Washington.

The Legislature recognized that if we are to create healthier children and families, we must take the steps to create affordable, comprehensive coverage for all Washingtonians. Lawmakers this year passed and funded Senate Bill 6333 which will study various health reform plans and initiate healthcare discussion forums around the state to identify a health reform proposal that works for Washington’s families, businesses and providers.

Finally, the Legislature recognized that we cannot create healthier children if their toys, products and clothes are making them sick. This year, Washington passed the nation’s most comprehensive Children’s Safe Products bill, House Bill 2647. Our state’s children will be protected from harmful toxins for generations to come thanks to the passage of this law. The Governor signed this bill after vetoing a section that would require the Department of Ecology to adopt rules by 2010. Instead, the Governor emphasized that it was important to focus on identifying the chemicals of high concern for children by 2009 first.

Even with this veto, the law is still the most comprehensive law of its kind in the country.

Next Steps

The Cover All Kids law continued to enjoy bipartisan support and strong interest in its successful implementation during the 2008 session. The investments made towards creating healthier environments for children and improving access to care are good for children and families around the state. However, successful outreach and enrollment campaigns need sustainable funding sources. In the 2009-2011 budget, we need to secure the funding for Medical Home payments and incentives as outlined in the Medical Home report. We look to the 2009 session to continue our commitment to children’s health.

Resources

Children’s Alliance
www.childrensalliance.org

Medical Home Report
Implementation Summary
HCCY Medical Home Legislative Agenda
Final Outreach Report to Legislature

Detailed Bill Information
www.leg.wa.gov

Looking for Health Insurance?
www.parenthelp123.org
### Anti-Hunger Bills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bill</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Farms, Healthy Kids</td>
<td>Sponsored by Senator Brian Hatfield, this new law increases access to locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables for school kids, low-income families and seniors. This law creates multiple policy changes to facilitate the purchase of local food by public schools; creates a pilot program to facilitate purchase of fresh, local food by food banks; increases acceptance of food stamps at farmers markets; and provides additional vouchers to low-income seniors and families to purchase fresh food at farmer’s markets. See below for funding amounts.</td>
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<td>SB 6483</td>
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### Anti-Hunger Budget Items

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase Access to Food Stamps $1,950,000</td>
<td>Funds implementation of a policy change to raise the gross income limit in the food stamp program to 200% of the federal poverty level. It is anticipated this will result in 23,000 new households receiving assistance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Stamps at Farmers Markets $50,000</td>
<td>(Implements SB 6483) Funds a pilot program to enable farmer’s markets to acquire and use the necessary technology to accept food stamps.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farm to School Program $290,000</td>
<td>(Implements SB 6483) Creates the staff positions at the state Department of Agriculture to establish a farm to school program.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fruit &amp; Vegetable Grant Program $600,000</td>
<td>(Implements SB 6483) Funds the creation of the WA-Grown Fruit &amp; Vegetable school grant program extending a current federal program that provides fresh fruits and vegetables to schools for healthy snacks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm to Food Bank $350,000</td>
<td>(Implements SB 6483) Creates a pilot project to enable food banks to directly purchase and distribute produce from local farmers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farmers Market Nutrition Program $200,000</td>
<td>(Implements SB 6483) Increases funds for vouchers provided to families with infants and toddlers, and seniors to purchase food at local farmer’s markets.</td>
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### Child Welfare & Foster Care Bills

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<tr>
<th>Bill</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Students in foster care</td>
<td>Sponsored by Representative Mary Helen Roberts, this law aims to improve educational outcomes for students in Foster Care. The Law requires the transfer of educational records within 2 days of requests by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). It requires an annual report from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction on the educational experiences and progress of students in Foster Care. Other parts of the bill and the budget items were passed by the Legislature but vetoed by the Governor. The vetoed items include educational advocates, a new coordinator, and a grant program for schools with large populations of foster children.</td>
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<tr>
<td>HB 2679</td>
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<tr>
<td>Federal criminal history checks</td>
<td>Sponsored by Representative Ruth Kagi, this law allows more time for follow-up of mandatory fingerprint-based background checks in emergency situations. When a child is placed in out-of-home care by DSHS, federal and state laws require fingerprint-based background checks for the care providers. In emergency circumstances, such as in the middle of the night, an initial background check of potential caregivers is done using name and date-of-birth; the Children’s Administration then has 14 days to submit the fingerprint-based checks.</td>
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<td>HB 2835</td>
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### Child Welfare & Foster Care Bills Continued

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<tr>
<th>Bill Title</th>
<th>Sponsor</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foster parent licensing HB 3145</td>
<td>Sponsored by Representative Ruth Kagi, this law directs DSHS to develop recommendations for creating intensive resource home providers and expanding the Mockingbird Family Model. A status update is due to the Legislature and the Governor by January 31, 2009, and a full report with recommendations by September 1, 2009.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child long-term well-being HB 3205</td>
<td>Sponsored by Representative Fred Jarrett, this aligns Washington state law with Federal law requiring a petition for the termination of parental rights be filed when a child has been in foster care for 15 of the past 22 months unless the court determines there is good cause. It also requires the court to review termination exceptions at subsequent hearings in the child’s case. Renames the Washington Council of Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect to the Council on Children and Families.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child fatality SB 6206</td>
<td>Sponsored by Senator Joseph Zarelli, this law requires unexpected child fatalities or near fatalities occurring within one year of the child receiving child welfare services to be reviewed. The law requires DSHS to notify the Office of Family and Children’s Ombudsman (OFCO) and the child’s guardian ad litem when a near fatality occurs to a child who has received child welfare services in the past 12 months. Requires OFCO to issue an annual report to the legislature on the status of the implementation of child fatality and near fatality review recommendations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visitation rights for relatives of dependant children SB 6306</td>
<td>Sponsored by Senator Phil Rockefeller, this law establishes an additional process for relatives of a dependent child to petition the court for visitation with the child.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dependency matters SB 6792</td>
<td>Sponsored by Senator James Hargrove, this law creates several policy changes related to children and families who are connected to the child welfare system and to the HOPE Act. It modifies provisions related to: reinstatement of parental rights, shelter care hearings, permanency plans and restraining orders in cases involving alleged child abuse. The law also codifies monthly visits and allows the visits of accredited Child Placement Agencies to qualify.</td>
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### Child Welfare & Foster Care Budget Items

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<tr>
<td>Supervised visits between parents and children $2,300,000</td>
<td>This one-time funding will pay for increases in costs for supervised visits between children in foster care and their parents.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Face-to-face visits with foster children $1,148,000</td>
<td>These funds will pay for the hiring of additional staff to expedite the State’s commitment to provide each child in foster care a face-to-face visit with a caseworker every 30 day.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Safety Assessments $800,000</td>
<td>This funding provides for comprehensive safety assessments by medical professionals for children at risk of neglect or abuse. These assessments will better enable the state to provide services to families and make informed decisions about the best course of action for a child at risk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional licensing staff $657,000</td>
<td>This funding to the Division of Licensed Resources will enable the hiring of 7.5 additional licensing staff to reduce the backlog in the review and approval of foster parent license applications. This is intended to reduce the shortage of foster families for children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialized Foster Parent Recruitment &amp; Retention $997,000 (To implement HB 3145)</td>
<td>This funding will provide a stipend, additional training and services to foster families in two areas in the state with high concentrations of children in foster care with high needs. This will help in the recruitment and retention of families with the commitment and skill to foster children in need of more intensive services. $200,000 of this funding goes to expand the Mockingbird Family Model.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster youth education $0 (To implement HB 2679)</td>
<td>$943,000 to fund services to help ensure children in foster care have a better chance of succeeding in school. Unfortunately, this investment was vetoed by the Governor before she signed the budget.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Welfare &amp; Foster Care Budget Items Continued</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Child long-term well-being</strong>&lt;br&gt;$144,000&lt;br&gt;(To implement HB 3205)**</td>
<td>Funding is provided for the increased workload under the new law (HB 3205). Requires the filing of a petition to terminate parental rights when a child has been in foster care for 15 of the past 22 months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health screenings for kids in foster care</strong>&lt;br&gt;$1,068,000</td>
<td>This funding will hire additional staff to perform child health education and tracking (CHET) screens which assess the emotional, social, health, and development support needs of children in foster care. This funding is intended to enable the state to meet long-neglected goals for CHET screenings for all children in foster care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foster Care Multi-Dimensional Treatment</strong>&lt;br&gt;$0</td>
<td>$900,000 was provided by the legislature for a multidimensional program to recruit foster homes to serve these children. However, these investments were vetoed by the Governor.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sibling visits</strong>&lt;br&gt;$2,407,000</td>
<td>This funding will provide for children in foster care who are living apart from their siblings to have regular, twice monthly visits. These funds will be used to contract with non-profits to facilitate the visits. The state has fallen short of agreed upon benchmarks for sibling visits in recent years and these funds are intended to reverse that pattern.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Home Support Specialists</strong>&lt;br&gt;$0</td>
<td>$1,447,000 was allocated by the legislature to hire twenty home support specialists, and necessary supervisory and support staff, in counties experiencing an increase in dependency filings above the state average. These funds were vetoed by the Governor.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child Safety Legislation</strong>&lt;br&gt;$71,000&lt;br&gt;(To implement SB 6206)**</td>
<td>This funding is provided to implement changes to child abuse and neglect reports in order to make them more complete and transparent and improve the department’s response to those reports.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foster youth aging out study</strong>&lt;br&gt;$19,000</td>
<td>This funds a study by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) that includes a national review of state programs for youth transitioning out of foster care, as well as, a survey of foster youth and parents in Washington regarding current services for youth transitioning out of foster care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family and Juvenile court improvement</strong>&lt;br&gt;$800,000&lt;br&gt;(To implement HB 2822)**</td>
<td>This funding will begin implementation of a family and juvenile court program that includes family court coordinators, training for judicial officers and other changes to more effectively serve the needs of children and families involved in the court system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Braam Panel</strong>&lt;br&gt;$450,000</td>
<td>This funding will support the ongoing operations of the panel. In 2004 the State of Washington agreed to settle the “Braam v. Washington” lawsuit brought on behalf of former foster children in Washington. The Braam Oversight Panel was created to oversee implementation of the agreements in the settlement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### Early Learning Bills

| WA Head Start Program<br>**HB 3168** | Sponsored by Representative Roger Goodman, this law directs the Department of Early Learning (DEL) to develop a plan to merge existing early education programs and establish a statewide Washington Head Start Program. The report is due to the Governor and the Legislature by December 1, 2009. |
| Close the Achievement Gap for African American Students<br>**HB 2722** | Sponsored by Representative Eric Pettigrew, this law directs the Center for Improvement of Student Learning (CISL) to convene a 15-member advisory committee to craft a strategic plan to address the academic achievement gap for African-American students. The law requires the committee to analyze data and best practices and develop a comprehensive plan. Implementation is to begin in January 2010, with subsequent annual reports on progress toward goals. |
### Early Learning Budget Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home-visiting</td>
<td>$0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Washington Head Start</td>
<td>$250,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kindergarten assessment study</td>
<td>$150,000</td>
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### Children and Families Health Bills

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Bill</th>
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<tr>
<td>Toxic Toys HB 2647</td>
<td>Sponsored by Representative Mary Lou Dickerson, the Children’s Safe Products Act prohibits the manufacturing and sale of children’s products that contain harmful levels of chemicals including lead, cadmium, or phthalates. The law also directs the Department of Ecology (DOE) to identify other dangerous, high priority chemicals and recommend policy options for addressing these chemicals by January 1, 2009. The Governor signed this bill after vetoing a section that would require the Department of Ecology to adopt rules by 2010. Instead the Governor emphasized that it was important to focus on identifying the chemicals of high concern for children by 2009 first. Even with this veto, the law is the most comprehensive law of its kind in the country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health insurance information for students SB 5100</td>
<td>Sponsored by Senator Steve Hobbs, this law creates a pilot project in six school districts where schools inquire about students’ health coverage when they enroll in school. With parental permission, the child’s insurance status will be shared between the school district, DSHS, and a local health outreach organization in order to help families enroll in health coverage programs. The Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) will report on program participation and outcomes to the Legislature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care work group SB 6333</td>
<td>Sponsored by Senator Karen Keiser, this law establishes a 13-member work group to consider health care reform proposals and directs the Legislature to contract for an evaluation of four health care reform proposals. The proposals range from reforming health care purchasing to providing universal coverage for all residents.</td>
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### Children & Families Health Budget Items

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<tr>
<td>Cover All Kids Outreach</td>
<td>$921,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased Non-Medicaid Funding</td>
<td>$6.25 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Professional Assistance</td>
<td>$1.25 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s Safe Products</td>
<td>$35,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children &amp; Families Health Budget Items Continued</strong></td>
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</table>
| **Health Care Workgroup Support**  
$1,276 million  
(To implement SB 6333)**  |
| These funds are allocated to the Healthcare Working Group and the completion of the study requested under SB 6333. |
| **Family Planning Support**  
$4 million  |
| This funding restored family planning and sexually transmitted disease (STD) related services to more than 20,000 people who lost eligibility, in order to reduce the amount of unintended pregnancies and the costs associated with it. |
| **Child Death Review**  
$100,000  |
| This funding provided to support the Child Death Review program, which reviews deaths of children under 18 who have unexpectedly lost their lives. The program determines if any deaths could have been prevented and considers strategies to improve the overall health and safety for all children. |

<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Financial Support Bills</strong></th>
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| **Working Families Tax Credit**  
**SB 6809**  |
| Sponsored by Senator Craig Pridemore, this law will alleviate some financial pressures for about 337,000 low-income households through a sales tax rebate—96% of these households have children. |

<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Bills not passed in 2008</strong></th>
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| **Smoking in vehicles**  
**HB 2519**  
**SB 6287**  |
| Sponsored by Representative Shay Schual-Berke and Senator Chris Marr, this bill would have prohibited smoking in vehicles with children, protecting them from the dangers associated with second hand smoke such as asthma—the most common chronic disorder in childhood—currently affecting an estimated 6.8 million children. |
| **Kindergarten Readiness**  
**HB 2597**  |
| Sponsored by Representative Pat Sullivan, this bill would have ensured all children were prepared to excel in school by offering kindergarten readiness assessments to all kindergarten programs. A survey of Washington kindergarten teachers in 2004 found that more than half of entering kindergarteners were not ready for school. |
| **Family Leave Task Force**  
**HB 2665**  |
| Sponsored by Representative Mary Lou Dickerson, this bill would have guaranteed the proper implementation of the Family Leave bill, providing $250 a week for people who need to care for a new or adopted child and can’t afford to take time off with no pay. |
| **Domestic Violence pilot program**  
**HB 2520**  |
| Sponsored by Representative Shay Schual-Berke, this domestic violence program would have placed a full-time domestic violence advocate in a minimum of one office of the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) to identify and respond effectively to domestic violence as child abuse occurs in 30-60% of domestic violence cases involving families with children. |

* For more information on vetoes visit the Governor’s website: [www.governor.wa.gov/billaction/2008](http://www.governor.wa.gov/billaction/2008)
At the Children’s Alliance we advocate for kids. We ensure that laws, policies and programs work for kids, and we hold leaders accountable until they secure the resources required to make all children safe and healthy.

It’s time for all of us to stand up for kids. By joining and supporting the Children’s Alliance, you and thousands of others like you make kids’ lives better. We’ll give you what you need to connect your passion to action, live your beliefs and do right by kids.

Join and give online. Learn more at our action center, or contact us at action@childrensalliance.org or call us at 1.800.854.KIDS.