

**RCW 43.216.565 Findings—Intent—Early start program.** The legislature finds that the first five years of a child's life establish the foundation for educational success. The legislature also finds that children who have high quality early learning opportunities from birth through age five are more likely to succeed throughout their K-12 education and beyond. The legislature further finds that the benefits of high quality early learning experiences are particularly significant for low-income parents and children, and provide an opportunity to narrow the opportunity gap in Washington's K-12 educational system. The legislature understands that early supports for high-risk parents of young children through home visiting services show a high return on investment due to significantly improved chances of better education, health, and life outcomes for children. The legislature further recognizes that, when parents work or go to school, high quality and full-day early learning opportunities should be available and accessible for their children. In order to improve education outcomes, particularly for low-income children, the legislature is committed to expanding high quality early learning opportunities and integrating currently disparate funding streams for all birth-to-five early learning services including, working connections child care and the early childhood education and assistance program, into a single high quality continuum of learning that provides essential services to low-income families and prepares all enrolled children for success in school. The legislature therefore intends to establish the early start program to provide a continuum of high quality and accountable early learning opportunities for Washington's parents and children. [2013 c 323 § 1. Formerly RCW 43.215.460.]