

# Make the Early Learning Facilities (ELF) Fund More Accessible: Pass [HB 1314](#) (Callan/Abbarno) and [SB 5297](#) (Trudeau/Torres)

With bipartisan sponsorship in both the House and the Senate, [HB 1314](#) / [SB 5297](#) (Concerning the early learning facilities grant and loan program) would make these important changes to Early Learning Facilities (ELF) Fund programs:

- **Establish an emergency grant program for projects necessitated by unforeseen circumstances.**

- ELF Fund resources are available to early learning programs on two-year cycles, and they are reserved for planned projects that retain or grow capacity. However, early learning facilities experience unanticipated emergencies sometimes without resources for repairs that are necessary to maintain health and safety. A non-competitive emergency fund would make it possible for programs with limited resources to keep their doors open following unplanned disasters.



- **Ease the burden on financially constrained providers by moderating matching fund requirements.**

- This bill would neutralize language requiring matching funds for eligible providers to be competitive for ELF Fund grants. The proposed change signals that matching requirements shouldn't be a barrier for providers with limited access to resources.

- **Make Tribal Compact Schools eligible for the ELF Public School Districts Program.**

- Without access to the ELF Public School Districts Program, Tribal Compact Schools are unintentionally pitted against other tribal early learning programs in competition for limited capital resources. Making Tribal Compact Schools eligible for the Public School Districts Program would make access to resources more equitable.

- **Clarify that projects supporting the conversion of ECEAP slots to full day and/or extended day are eligible for ELF Fund programs.**

- To better meet the needs of working families, DCYF has proposed converting a number of part-day ECEAP slots to full- and extended-day slots. This bill clarifies that capital projects serving more children through slot conversion are eligible for ELF funds.

The [Early Learning Facilities \(ELF\) Fund](#) makes high-quality, affordable preschool and child care available to more Washington families by preserving and expanding physical capacity to serve children. Since its inception in 2017, [the ELF Fund has retained and/or created a total of 17,676 early learning slots](#). With minor, and no- or low-cost policy changes, more providers can have access to these essential resources. ELF Fund resources are distributed through three Commerce-operated grant programs: 1. [Eligible Organizations Program](#); 2. [Health and Safety Minor Renovations Program](#); 3. [Public School Districts Program](#). ELF Fund resources are also distributed through Enterprise Community Partners' [Washington Early Learning Loan \(WELL\) Program](#).

*The Early Learning Facilities Group is convened by Start Early Washington ([Sign up for Weekly Notes from Olympia](#)).  
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January 23, 2025*