

FEBRUARY CASELOAD FORECAST

February 13, 2026



On Wednesday, February 11 the Washington State Caseload Forecast Council met to receive the latest projected [caseloads](#) (expected enrollment and participation) for state entitlement programs such as K-12 education, long-term care, and prisons. The Caseload Forecast is an important benchmark for legislators in drafting House and Senate budget proposals as the forecast directs how much the state must spend on various entitlement programs.

These forecasts are predicated on current law and policy, meaning they do not reflect any legislation currently being considered by lawmakers this session. The [November forecast](#) included updated projections based on legislation passed in 2025 as well as impacts of H.R. 1 as we understand them to date. Currently, the greatest risks to the predictability of forecasts across entitlement programs are immigration enforcement activities and general economic conditions.

One of the [summary documents](#) prepared by the Caseload Forecast Council breaks down where state program forecasts came in higher, lower, or negligible/unchanged from the previous forecast in November. In tight budget times, “lower than” and “unchanged/negligible” forecasts are preferable over those higher than the previous forecasts.

Programs forecasted in February to have higher caseloads than the previous forecasts will in turn drive higher costs for the state budget. The DOC Community Custody Violators, College Bound Scholarship, and Extended Foster Care programs have the highest increases from the November forecast with 15.4%, 10.7%, and 7.9% increases in their forecasts respectively. The Community Custody Violator program’s increase is based on a policy change that restored 30-day maximum confinements for high-level violations. The College Bound Scholarship program increase is in part due to soft labor market conditions for younger people and an increase in the number of pledges meeting income eligibility. Extended Foster Care caseload increases are following a similar, but delayed, trend as seen in Licensed Foster Care.

Early Learning Caseloads

Early Childhood Education Assistance Program

Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) caseloads were unchanged/negligible for the second forecast in a row. Funded slot utilization reached roughly pre-pandemic levels in the early part of the 2025-26 school year and now enrollment has been closer to funded capacity for the current school year. **This forecast does not reflect the impact of the anticipated Ballmer Group investment since the PreK Promise Account is still under consideration.** Following the passage of [HB 2159](#) / [ESB 5872](#), the June 2026 Caseload Forecast would reflect the projected impact.

	November 2025 Forecast	February 2026 Forecast	Difference from November to February	Percent Difference
SFY 2026	13,948	13,995	47	0.3%
SFY 2027	14,193	14,279	86	0.6%

Working Connections Child Care

Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) caseloads are projected to be lower than the November forecast due to step adjustments modeling the caseload impact of ESSB 5752 copayment schedules, prospective payments, and the repeal of expanded eligibility for child care employees.

	November 2025 Forecast	February 2026 Forecast	Difference from November to February	Percent Difference
SFY 2026	38,975	37,987	(988)	(2.5%)
SFY 2027	42,239	41,552	(687)	(1.6%)

Transition to Kindergarten

Transition to Kindergarten (TTK) also has an unchanged/negligible forecast because its caseload is capped by funding in the 2025-27 biennial budget. Its caseload remains at 7,266.

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