

Committee on Budget

CS/HB 5103 — School Readiness Program

by Appropriations Committee; PreK-12 Appropriations Subcommittee and Rep. Coley (SB 1974 by Budget Committee)

- Clarifies school readiness programs to be operated full-time and part-time.
- Defines terms for purposes of the School Readiness Act.
- Prioritizes services to eligible children from birth to kindergarten.
- Requires definitions for expenditures and reports for:
 - Direct expenditures for services to children;
 - Administrative costs;
 - Nondirect expenditures; and
 - Quality.
- Requires the Office of Early Learning to:
 - Adopt a list of approved curricula;
 - Identify a preassessment and postassessment;
 - Adopt a statewide, standardized contract to be used by coalitions with each school readiness provider;
 - Coordinate with other agencies to perform data matches on individuals or families participating in the school readiness program; and
 - Submit annually a recommended allocation of funds to the School Readiness Allocation Conference including payment rates, parent co-payment percentages, and the Gold Seal premium rate percentage.
- Revises procurement requirements and requirements for the expenditure of funds by early learning coalitions.
- Requires coalitions to merge if they are unable to comply with expenditure requirements.
- Allows the Office of Early Learning to provide a waiver for merging coalitions for the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 years if justification for excess expenditures are provided.
- Incorporates existing licensing guidelines which are identified in other areas of statute.
- Revises the eligibility criteria for the enrollment of children in the school readiness program and provides the following priorities by which children are enrolled:
 - First priority is a child under 13 from a working family receiving TANF;
 - Second priority is an at-risk child under 9;
 - Third priority is a child under 6 from an economically disadvantaged family, and children younger than 6 who are disabled;
 - Fourth priority is a child ages 9 through 13 who is a sibling of a younger child in the school readiness program through the at-risk provision;
 - Fifth priority is a child ages 6 through 13 who is a sibling of a younger child in the school readiness program through the economically disadvantaged provision; and
 - Last priority is for a child who is also concurrently enrolled in the Head Start program and the Voluntary Prekindergarten Program.
- Provides for the allocation of school readiness funds as specified in the General Appropriations Act, s. 411.01(10) and 411.013, F.S.

- For 2012-2013, requires the Office of Early Learning to submit by May 31, 2012, a recommended formula for the allocation of School Readiness Program funds, including standardized provider payment rates, Gold Seal premium rate percentages, and a parent co-payment percentage to the School Readiness Allocation Conference for review. The recommended formula will be phased-in over a three-year period.
- Requires recalculation of the funding allocations quarterly by the Office of Early Learning.
- Deletes provisions for the establishment of an allocation formula by the Office of Early Learning.
- Defines and limits expenditures for administrative activities, quality activities, and nondirect activities.
- Provides for fraud investigations and provides penalties for school readiness providers and parents who knowingly submit false information related to child eligibility and attendance in a school readiness program.
- Creates the School Readiness Allocation Conference, whose duties are to review allocation recommendations by the Office of Early Learning.
- Establishes a due date for school readiness providers to submit market rates to be used as part of the prevailing market rate schedule.

This bill substantially amends ss. 216.136, 411.01, 411.0101, 411.01013, 411.0106, 445.023, F.S., and creates s. 411.013, F.S.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect upon becoming law and on July 1, 2012.

Vote: Senate 37-1; House 82-32