

By Senator Holzendorf

2-467A-99

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to school readiness; providing
3 a short title; providing legislative intent;
4 creating the Florida Partnership for School
5 Readiness, Inc.; creating the School Readiness
6 Governing Board to operate as the board of
7 directors of the School Readiness Partnership;
8 providing responsibilities and duties of the
9 School Readiness Partnership and governing
10 board; providing membership of the governing
11 board and meeting requirements; providing that
12 the School Readiness Partnership is subject to
13 public records and public meeting requirements;
14 providing for hiring certain employees;
15 providing for the partnership's powers as a
16 corporation; requiring that the partnership
17 prepare a system for measuring school
18 readiness; specifying objectives to be measured
19 by such system; requiring that the partnership
20 contract with an independent entity to evaluate
21 the measurement system; requiring the
22 partnership to make recommendations to the
23 Governor and the State Board of Education;
24 authorizing the partnership to adopt rules;
25 establishing a School Readiness Coordinating
26 Council; providing for the council to be
27 assigned to the Executive Office of the
28 Governor for administrative purposes; providing
29 for voluntary establishment of a school
30 readiness coalition in each county; specifying
31 services to be provided by coalitions;

1 providing for designation and approval of a
2 fiscal agent; providing for coalition
3 initiation grants to develop school readiness
4 plans; providing for awarding incentive
5 bonuses; providing requirements for school
6 readiness plans; providing for parental choice
7 with respect to child care arrangements and
8 payments; providing for evaluation and
9 performance measures; providing that federal
10 requirements control in the case of conflict;
11 creating s. 411.05, F.S.; requiring the
12 Department of Education to adopt the school
13 readiness screening instruments developed by
14 the School Readiness Partnership and to require
15 their use by the school districts; creating s.
16 411.06, F.S.; recognizing the nationwide
17 Parents as Teachers Program; establishing the
18 Florida Parents as Teachers Program under the
19 jurisdiction of the School Readiness
20 Partnership; providing program requirements;
21 creating the School Readiness Program
22 Needs-Assessment Conference; providing for the
23 conference to develop official information
24 relating to the school readiness programs;
25 providing for the principals of the conference;
26 amending s. 414.026, F.S.; requiring that the
27 chairperson of the Partnership for School
28 Readiness, Inc., serve on the WAGES Program
29 State Board of Directors; amending s. 624.91,
30 F.S.; requiring the Healthy Kids Corporation to
31 work cooperatively with the Florida Partnership

1 for School Readiness, Inc.; exempting family
2 child care providers from increased standards;
3 repealing s. 411.222(4), F.S., relating to the
4 State Coordinating Council for Early Childhood
5 Services; providing effective dates.

6
7 WHEREAS, the bridge to opportunity for every child must
8 be anchored in a healthy body and a healthy mind and must lead
9 to the child's readiness to learn in school, and

10 WHEREAS, it is widely acknowledged that entering school
11 ready to learn is crucial to a child's success both in school
12 and in life, and

13 WHEREAS, the state's system of public education could
14 better perform its mission of educating its K-12 students if
15 more students enter school healthy and ready to learn, and

16 WHEREAS, as emphasized by the Governor, the President
17 of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of
18 Representatives, a child's health in both body and mind is
19 essential to the child's ability to learn, and

20 WHEREAS, we can make great strides to improve school
21 readiness by addressing child care, child health, and school
22 readiness education in one single, accountable continuum, NOW,
23 THEREFORE,

24
25 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

26
27 Section 1. This act may be cited as the "School
28 Readiness Act." Nothing in this act is intended to impede or
29 curtail the state's ability to draw down federal funds.

30 Section 2. Section 411.01, Florida Statutes, is
31 created to read:

1 411.01 Florida Partnership for School Readiness, Inc.;
2 school readiness coalitions.--

3 (1) LEGISLATIVE INTENT.--

4 (a) It is the intent of the Legislature that the early
5 childhood health care, child care, and education of children
6 from birth to 5 years of age or until the child attains school
7 readiness, whichever is later, become a top priority.

8 (b) Recognizing that high-quality early childhood
9 health care, child care, and education experiences increase
10 children's chances of educational success and reduce the need
11 for costly future intervention and remediation, it is the
12 intent of the Legislature that all children in this state,
13 from birth until they are ready for school, have access to
14 quality early childhood health care, child care, and education
15 to enhance their readiness to succeed in school.

16 (c) Recognizing that parents are responsible for the
17 early childhood health care, child care, and education of
18 their children, but also recognizing that the condition of
19 children in this state must be improved, it is the intent of
20 the Legislature that local communities offer assistance to
21 families to improve the early childhood health care, child
22 care, and education of children under 5 years of age and the
23 school readiness of all children who enter the state's public
24 school system. High-quality early childhood experiences and
25 care should be provided with a minimum of governmental
26 interference.

27 (d) The Legislature finds that for families to move to
28 and maintain economic self-sufficiency, Florida must have an
29 efficient way for these families to access quality early
30 childhood health care, child care, and education services. The
31 Legislature recognizes that significant benefits will accrue

1 to children and families who have efficient access to quality
2 early childhood health care, child care, and education
3 arrangements.

4 (e) It is the intent of the Legislature that all early
5 childhood health care, child care, and education programs and
6 services serving this state's children in the first 5 years of
7 life or until the child attains school readiness, whichever is
8 later, are considered school readiness programs. The
9 Legislature finds that despite the efforts of hundreds of
10 thousands of Floridians and increased collaboration among
11 service providers, services for young children remain
12 uncoordinated, uneven in quality, and inaccessible to many. It
13 is the intent of the Legislature that a true continuum of
14 high-quality, coordinated, and comprehensive early childhood
15 health care, child care, and education be available to all
16 children from birth to 5 years of age or until the child
17 attains school readiness, whichever is later.

18 (f) The Legislature recognizes new brain-development
19 research emphasizing the critical importance of the first
20 years of life in children's emotional, social, and cognitive
21 development, and that these scientific discoveries create an
22 opportunity to apply the findings to all programs and services
23 for children from birth to 5 years of age. The Legislature
24 also recognizes that the period of time from birth to 3 years
25 of age is an optimal time for learning in the areas of motor
26 development, emotional control, vision, social attachment,
27 vocabulary, second language, and logic.

28 (g) Publicly funded early education and child care
29 programs are defined as prekindergarten early intervention
30 programs, Head Start programs, programs offered by public or
31 private providers of child care, preschool programs for

1 children with disabilities, programs for migrant children,
2 Title I programs, subsidized child care programs, teen parent
3 programs, and other services.

4 (2) SCHOOL READINESS PROGRAMS.--For purposes of this
5 chapter, all early childhood health care, child care, and
6 education programs that are funded with state, federal,
7 lottery, or local public funds and provide services to
8 children from birth to 5 years of age or until the child
9 attains school readiness, whichever is later, shall be school
10 readiness programs and shall work to achieve their part of the
11 goal of children entering school with healthy bodies and
12 healthy minds, ready to succeed in school.

13 (3) SCHOOL READINESS GOVERNING BOARD.--

14 (a) There is created a School Readiness Governing
15 Board to operate as the board of directors of the Florida
16 Partnership for School Readiness, Inc., with responsibility
17 for adopting and maintaining coordinated programmatic,
18 administrative, and fiscal policies and standards for all
19 school readiness programs, while allowing a wide range of
20 programmatic flexibility and differentiation.

21 (b)1. As a condition for receiving funds appropriated
22 to the Florida Partnership for School Readiness, Inc., the
23 members of the School Readiness Governing Board shall include
24 the Governor, the Commissioner of Education, the Secretary of
25 Children and Family Services, the chairperson of the WAGES
26 Program State Board of Directors, and the chairperson of the
27 Florida Council of 100.

28 2. The governing board shall also include 10 members
29 of the public who shall be business, community, and civic
30 leaders in the state who are not elected to public office and
31 who do not earn their income in the early education and child

1 care industry. The members must be geographically and
2 demographically representative of the state. Each member shall
3 be appointed by the Governor. Six of the members shall be
4 appointed from a list of 10 nominees, of which five must be
5 submitted by the President of the Senate and five must be
6 submitted by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.
7 Members shall be appointed to 4-year terms of office. However,
8 of the initial appointees, two shall be appointed to 1-year
9 terms, two shall be appointed to 2-year terms, three shall be
10 appointed to 3-year terms, and three shall be appointed to
11 4-year terms. The members of the governing board shall elect a
12 chairperson annually. Any vacancy on the governing board shall
13 be filled in the same manner as the original appointment.

14 (c) The governing board shall meet quarterly and may
15 meet as often as it deems necessary to carry out its duties
16 and responsibilities. Members of the governing board shall
17 participate without proxy at the quarterly meetings. The
18 governing board may take official action by a majority vote of
19 the members present at any meeting at which a quorum is
20 present. The governing board shall hold its first meeting by
21 August 1, 1999.

22 (d) Members of the governing board are subject to the
23 ethics provisions in part III of chapter 112, and no member
24 may derive any financial benefit from the funds administered
25 by the School Readiness Partnership.

26 (e) Members of the governing board shall serve without
27 compensation but are entitled to reimbursement for per diem
28 and travel expenses incurred in the performance of their
29 duties as provided in s. 112.061, and reimbursement for other
30 reasonable, necessary, and actual expenses.

31

1 (f) For the purposes of tort liability, the members of
2 the governing board and its employees shall be governed by s.
3 768.28.

4 (g) The governing board shall appoint an executive
5 director to serve at its pleasure who shall perform the duties
6 assigned to him or her by the governing board. The executive
7 director shall be responsible for appointing all employees and
8 staff members who shall serve under his or her direction and
9 control.

10 (h) The governing board has complete fiscal control
11 over the Florida Partnership for School Readiness, Inc., and
12 is responsible for all corporate operations. The governing
13 board is responsible for the prudent use of all public and
14 private funds and shall ensure that the use of such funds is
15 in accordance with all legal and contractual requirements.

16 (4) FLORIDA PARTNERSHIP FOR SCHOOL READINESS, INC.
17 (SCHOOL READINESS PARTNERSHIP).--

18 (a) The Legislature creates the Florida Partnership
19 for School Readiness, Inc. (School Readiness Partnership),
20 which shall be a public-private nonprofit organization, which
21 shall be registered, incorporated, organized, and operated in
22 compliance with chapter 617, and which may not be a unit or
23 entity of state government. The Legislature determines,
24 however, that public policy dictates that the School Readiness
25 Partnership operate in the most open and accessible manner
26 consistent with its public purpose. To this end, the
27 Legislature specifically declares that the School Readiness
28 Partnership is subject to the provisions of chapter 119 which
29 relate to public records, and the provisions of chapter 286
30 which relate to public meetings and records.

31

1 (b) The Florida Partnership for School Readiness,
2 Inc., shall establish one or more corporate offices, at least
3 one of which shall be located in Leon County.

4 (c) The Florida Partnership for School Readiness,
5 Inc., is the principal organization responsible for the
6 enhancement of school readiness for the state's children. The
7 Florida Partnership for School Readiness, Inc., shall have
8 specific responsibility for approving plans, facilitating
9 local implementation, and providing technical assistance to
10 the school readiness coalitions created in this section.

11 (d) The School Readiness Partnership shall have all
12 powers necessary to carry out the purposes of this section,
13 including, but not limited to, the power to receive and accept
14 grants, loans, or advances of funds from any public or private
15 agency and to receive and accept from any source contributions
16 of money, property, labor, or any other thing of value, to be
17 held, used, and applied for the purposes of this section.

18 (e) The Florida Partnership for School Readiness,
19 Inc., shall be an independent nonpartisan body and shall not
20 be identified or affiliated with any one agency, program, or
21 group.

22 (f) The Florida Partnership for School Readiness,
23 Inc., shall have a budget, shall be financed through an annual
24 appropriation made for this purpose in the General
25 Appropriations Act, and shall be subject to compliance audits
26 and annual financial audits by the Auditor General.

27 (g) The partnership shall coordinate the efforts
28 toward school readiness in this state and provide independent
29 policy analyses and recommendations to the Governor, the State
30 Board of Education, and the Legislature.

31

1 (h) The partnership shall prepare and submit to the
2 State Board of Education a system for measuring school
3 readiness. The system must include a screening instrument, or
4 instruments, which shall provide objective data regarding the
5 following expectations for school readiness:

6 1. The child's immunizations and other health
7 requirements as necessary.

8 2. The child's display of physical development
9 appropriate for kindergarten.

10 3. The child's compliance with rules, limitations, and
11 routines.

12 4. The child's successful engagement in kindergarten
13 tasks.

14 5. The child's demonstration of appropriate
15 interactions with adults.

16 6. The child's demonstration of appropriate
17 interactions with peers.

18 7. The child's effective coping with challenges and
19 frustrations.

20 8. The child's demonstration of appropriate self-help
21 skills.

22 9. The child's ability to express his or her needs
23 appropriately.

24 10. The child's demonstration of verbal communication
25 skills necessary to succeed in kindergarten.

26 11. The child's demonstration of problem-solving
27 skills necessary to succeed in kindergarten.

28 12. The child's following of verbal directions.

29 13. The child's demonstration of curiosity,
30 persistence, and exploratory behavior.

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1 14. The child's demonstration of an interest in books
2 and other printed materials.

3 15. The child's paying attention to stories.

4 16. The child's participation in art and music
5 activities.

6 (i) The partnership shall prepare a plan for
7 implementing the system for measuring school readiness in such
8 a way that all children in this state have the opportunity to
9 undergo the screening in the year prior to their entry into
10 kindergarten. Participants in publicly funded school readiness
11 programs and children whose family income is at, or below, 150
12 percent of the federal poverty level shall undergo the
13 screening at no cost. Other children may undergo the screening
14 if their parents pay a nominal fee. The plan must include a
15 way to make the screening instrument and the training required
16 to administer it available to public and private providers of
17 preschool and child care programs, and a way to make the
18 screening available to children who do not participate in such
19 programs. Because children with disabilities may not be able
20 to meet all of the identified expectations for school
21 readiness, the plan for measuring school readiness shall
22 incorporate mechanisms for recognizing the potential
23 variations in expectations for school readiness when serving
24 children with disabilities and shall provide for communities
25 to serve children with disabilities.

26 (j) The partnership shall establish a method for
27 collecting data from the screening instrument and establish
28 guidelines for using the data so that the measurement, the
29 data collection, and the use of the data serve the statewide
30 goal that all children will be ready for school. The criteria
31 for determining which data to collect should be the usefulness

1 of the data to state policymakers and program administrators
2 in administering programs and allocating state funds.

3 (k) The partnership shall contract with an independent
4 entity for an evaluation of the measurement system. The
5 evaluation must provide the information that local and state
6 agencies, the Governor, and the Legislature need to provide
7 for the effective administration of programs that serve
8 preschool children. The evaluation must provide information
9 that will assist providers of private preschool and child care
10 programs in assessing the success of preschool and child care
11 programs and making decisions about improving program services
12 to prepare children for school.

13 (l) The partnership shall recommend to the Governor,
14 the Commissioner of Education, and the State Board of
15 Education rules, and revisions or repeal of rules, which would
16 increase the effectiveness of programs that prepare children
17 for school.

18 (m) The partnership shall conduct studies and planning
19 activities related to the overall improvement and
20 effectiveness of school-readiness measures.

21 (n) The partnership shall work with the Department of
22 Management Services for electronic funds transfer.

23 (o) The partnership shall recommend to the Legislature
24 the feasibility of combining funding streams for school
25 readiness programs into a School Readiness Trust Fund.

26 (p) The partnership shall submit an annual report of
27 its activities to the Governor, the President of the Senate,
28 the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the minority
29 leaders of both houses of the Legislature. In addition, the
30 partnership's reports and recommendations shall be made
31 available to the State Board of Education, other appropriate

1 state agencies and entities, district school boards, central
2 agencies for child care, and county public health units.

3
4 To ensure that the system for measuring school readiness is
5 comprehensive and appropriate statewide, as the system is
6 developed and implemented, the partnership must consult with
7 representatives of district school systems, providers of
8 public and private child care, health care providers, large
9 and small employers, experts in education for children with
10 disabilities, and experts in child development.

11 (q) The partnership may adopt rules necessary to
12 administer the provisions of this section relating to
13 preparation and implementation of the system for school
14 readiness, data collection, approving local coalition plans,
15 providing a method whereby a coalition could serve two or more
16 counties, awarding incentives to coalitions, and contracting
17 for an evaluation.

18 (5) SCHOOL READINESS COORDINATING COUNCIL.--

19 (a) The School Readiness Coordinating Council is
20 established with responsibility for advising the School
21 Readiness Commission regarding policies. The School Readiness
22 Coordinating Council shall consist of:

23 1. The Deputy Commissioner of Education Programs in
24 the Department of Education;

25 2. The Secretary of Children and Family Services or a
26 designated division director;

27 3. The Secretary of Health or a designated division
28 director;

29 4. The chairperson of the Child Care Partnership
30 Board;

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- 1 5. The executive director of the WAGES Program State
2 Board of Directors;
3 6. The president of the Florida Pediatric Society;
4 7. The chairperson of the Florida Council of 100;
5 8. The president of the Head Start Directors'
6 Association;
7 9. The president of the Florida Children's Forum;
8 10. The chairperson of the Developmental Disabilities
9 Council;
10 11. The director of the Healthy Start Coalition
11 Association;
12 12. The president of the Florida School Boards
13 Association;
14 13. The chairperson of the Florida Association of
15 Family Child Care Homes;
16 14. The chairperson of a school readiness coalition;
17 15. The president of the Florida Association of Child
18 Care Management;
19 16. The executive director of the Early Childhood
20 Association of Florida;
21 17. The chairperson of Florida Interagency
22 Coordinating Council for Infants and Toddlers;
23 18. The coordinator of the Florida Parent Resource
24 Organization;
25 19. A representative of the Family Network on
26 Disabilities of Florida;
27 20. The president of the Children's Services Council
28 Association of Florida;
29 21. The director of the Agency for Health Care
30 Administration;
31

1 22. The president of the Florida Association for Child
2 Development Education;

3 23. An individual certified in this state to teach
4 children of prekindergarten age; and

5 24. An additional four members representing the
6 private-sector business community. These four members must be
7 selected by a majority vote of the other members. The members
8 must be geographically and demographically representative of
9 the state.

10
11 The School Readiness Coordinating Council shall select a
12 chairperson from among the business community and a vice
13 chairperson.

14 (b) School Readiness Coordinating Council members are
15 entitled to receive per diem and expenses for travel, as
16 provided in s. 112.061, while carrying out the official
17 business of the council. For administrative purposes only, the
18 council shall be assigned to the Office of the Governor.

19 (c) The School Readiness Coordinating Council shall
20 meet two times per year.

21 (d) The School Readiness Coordinating Council shall be
22 staffed by the Office of the Governor and draw upon state
23 agency personnel and resources as needed to facilitate the
24 work of the School Readiness Partnership.

25 (e) Meetings of the School Readiness Coordinating
26 Council shall be open to the public and opportunity for public
27 comment shall be made available at each such meeting. The
28 staff of the School Readiness Coordinating Council shall
29 notify all persons who request such notice as to the date,
30 time, and place of each meeting.

31

1 (6) CREATION OF OPTIONAL PROGRAM; EXEMPTIONS.--The
2 school readiness program consisting of publicly funded
3 programs listed in paragraph (1)(g) is established. The school
4 readiness program is an optional program.

5 (a) School readiness coalitions.--

6 1.a. Each school readiness coalition must consist of
7 at least nine and no more than 15 members. Two members shall
8 be appointed by the district school board, two members shall
9 be appointed by the board of county commissioners, and two
10 members shall be appointed by the Department of Children and
11 Family Services district administrator. The six members thus
12 appointed shall appoint the remaining members of the
13 coalition.

14 b. School readiness coalition membership shall
15 include, in addition to private-sector business leaders, the
16 local public and private leaders in health care, education,
17 disabilities, and child welfare systems in each county. Three
18 members of the coalition must be administrators from each of
19 the following entities: The central agency for child care, the
20 district school board, and the Head Start Program. School
21 readiness coalition membership must include representatives
22 from programs serving children in the early education and
23 child care programs, must include a representative from the
24 Department of Health, and may include representatives from
25 organizations such as Children's Services Councils, Central
26 Agencies for Child Care, Healthy Start coalitions, district
27 school boards, child care licensing boards, local WAGES
28 coalitions, Head Start, municipal and county governments, the
29 Department of Children and Family Services, the county public
30 health unit, and chambers of commerce. Thirty percent of the
31 coalition members shall be from the private sector.

1 2. The school readiness coalition will replace the
2 district interagency coordinating council in any county where
3 a school readiness program is implemented.

4 (b) Program eligibility.--The school readiness program
5 shall be established for children from birth to 5 and one-half
6 years of age. The program shall consist of the programs listed
7 in paragraph (1)(g), be administered by the school readiness
8 coalition, and receive funds pursuant to SB or similar
9 legislation. Within funding limitations, the school readiness
10 coalition, along with all providers, shall make reasonable
11 efforts to accommodate the needs of children for extended-day
12 and extended-year services without compromising the quality of
13 the program.

14 (c) Standards; outcome measures.--

15 1. All publicly funded school readiness programs must
16 meet the following performance standards and outcome measures
17 developed by the Department of Education and the Department of
18 Children and Family Services:

19 a. They must help prepare preschool children to enter
20 kindergarten ready to learn, as measured by criteria
21 established by the School Readiness Partnership or, in the
22 absence of such criteria, by the School Readiness Checklist of
23 the Department of Education.

24 b. They must provide extended-day and extended-year
25 services to the maximum extent possible.

26 c. There must be coordinated staff development and
27 teaching opportunities.

28 d. There must be expanded access to community services
29 and resources for families to help achieve economic
30 self-sufficiency.

31

1 e. There must be a single point of entry and unified
2 waiting list.

3 f. If funding remains constant, they must serve at
4 least as many children as were served prior to implementation
5 of the program.

6 2. All participating publicly funded school readiness
7 programs must implement a comprehensive program of children
8 and family services that enhance the cognitive and physical
9 development of children to achieve the performance standards
10 and outcome measures specified in paragraph (a). At a minimum,
11 these programs must contain the following elements:

12 a. Developmentally appropriate curriculum.

13 b. An appropriate staff-to-child ratio, as required by
14 the respective participating programs.

15 c. A healthy and safe environment.

16 d. A resource and referral network to assist parents
17 in making an informed choice pursuant to s. 402.27.

18 (d) Implementation.--

19 1. The school readiness program may be implemented in
20 any county by a school readiness coalition with agreement of
21 the district school board and the Department of Children and
22 Family Services district and with approval of the School
23 Readiness Partnership. Approval by the School Readiness
24 Partnership must be predicated on the submission of a plan of
25 implementation prepared and submitted by the School Readiness
26 Coalition.

27 2. Each school readiness coalition shall develop a
28 plan for implementing the school readiness program to meet the
29 requirements of this section. The plan must include a written
30 description of the role of the program in the district's
31 effort to meet the first state education goal, readiness to

1 start school, including a description of the plan to involve
2 prekindergarten early intervention programs, Head Start
3 programs, programs offered by public or private providers of
4 child care, preschool programs for children with disabilities,
5 programs for migrant children, Title I programs, subsidized
6 child care programs, and teen parent programs. The plan must
7 also demonstrate how the program will ensure that each
8 3-year-old and 4-year-old child in a publicly funded early
9 education and child care program receives scheduled activities
10 and instruction designed to prepare children to enter
11 kindergarten ready to learn. Prior to implementation of the
12 program, the school readiness coalition must submit the plan
13 to the School Readiness Partnership for approval. The plan
14 shall be reviewed and revised as necessary, but not less than
15 every 3 years.

16 3. The plan for the school readiness program shall
17 include the following minimum standards and provisions:

18 a. A sliding fee scale, which is the same for all
19 programs, to be implemented and reflected in each program's
20 budget.

21 b. A choice of settings and locations in licensed,
22 registered, religious-exempt, or school-based programs to be
23 provided to parents.

24 c. Instructional staff who have completed the training
25 course as required in s. 402.305(2)(d)1., as well as staff who
26 have additional training or credentials as required by the
27 respective programs.

28 4. Persons with an early childhood teaching
29 certificate may provide support and supervision to other staff
30 in the early education and child care program.

31

1 (e) Reimbursement rate.--The school readiness
2 coalition shall develop a reimbursement rate schedule that
3 encompasses all publicly funded early education and child care
4 programs and complies with applicable state and federal laws
5 and regulations. The reimbursement rate schedule must include
6 the projected number of children to be served and must be
7 submitted to the School Readiness Partnership for approval.
8 Informal child care arrangements shall be reimbursed at not
9 more than 50 percent of the rate developed for family child
10 care.

11 (f) Requirements relating to fiscal agents.--The
12 fiscal agent may be a public entity or a private nonprofit
13 organization. A private, for-profit organization may serve as
14 a fiscal agent if at least 50 percent of the organization's
15 governing board members live in the coalition's service area.
16 The fiscal agent shall be required to provide all
17 administrative and direct funding services as determined by
18 the school readiness coalition. The cost of these services
19 shall be negotiated between the fiscal agent and the school
20 readiness coalition. The fiscal agent shall be responsible for
21 monitoring all providers to ensure that coalition funds are
22 expended in the manner and for the purpose required by the
23 funding source. Funds from the School Readiness Trust Fund may
24 not be paid to a provider unless the provider agrees to allow
25 the fiscal agent access to fulfill its monitoring
26 responsibilities.

27 (g) Coalition initiation grants; incentive bonuses.--
28 1. School readiness coalitions that are approved by
29 the Florida Partnership for School Readiness, Inc., by October
30 1, 1999, shall be eligible for a \$25,000 initiation grant to
31 support the school readiness coalition in developing its

1 school readiness plan. Upon approval by the School Readiness
2 Partnership of any coalition's plan that clearly shows
3 enhancement in the quality and standards of the school
4 readiness programs without diminishing the number of children
5 served in the programs, the School Readiness Partnership shall
6 award the coalition an incentive bonus on a per-student-served
7 basis, subject to appropriation.

8 2. School readiness coalitions that have their plans
9 approved by the Florida Partnership for School Readiness,
10 Inc., by March 1, 2000, shall receive incentive bonus funding
11 on a per-student basis, with a minimum amount of \$25,000 per
12 coalition. Funds shall be available to a coalition 30 days
13 after its plan is approved.

14 (h) Parental choice; payment arrangement.--The school
15 readiness program shall be provided in a manner that ensures,
16 to the maximum extent possible, parental choice through
17 flexibility in early education and child care arrangements and
18 payment arrangements. Payment arrangements must be in
19 accordance with all federal and state laws that govern the
20 respective participating programs.

21 (i) Evaluation and annual report.--Each school
22 readiness coalition shall conduct an evaluation of the
23 effectiveness of the school readiness program, including
24 performance standards and outcome measures, and shall provide
25 an annual report and fiscal statement to the School Readiness
26 Partnership, the Governor, and the President of the Senate and
27 the Speaker of the House of Representatives for review by the
28 Legislature. This report must conform to the content and
29 format specifications set by the School Readiness Partnership.

30
31

1 (7) CONFLICTING PROVISIONS.--In the event of a
2 conflict between the provisions of this section and federal
3 requirements, the federal requirements shall control.

4 Section 3. Section 411.05, Florida Statutes, is
5 created to read:

6 411.05 School readiness screening instruments.--The
7 Department of Education shall adopt the school readiness
8 screening instruments developed by the Florida Partnership for
9 School Readiness, Inc., and shall require that:

10 (1) All school districts administer the kindergarten
11 screening instrument to each kindergarten student in the
12 district school system.

13 (2) All school districts that operate preschool
14 programs administer the age-appropriate screening instrument
15 to each preschool student in the district's preschool
16 programs.

17 Section 4. Section 411.06, Florida Statutes, is
18 created to read:

19 411.06 Florida Parents as Teachers Program.--

20 (1) The Legislature recognizes that the nationwide
21 Parents as Teachers Program has demonstrated that it is a
22 cost-effective program that produces outstanding results and
23 long-term cost savings. There is established the Florida
24 Parents as Teachers Program under the jurisdiction of the
25 Florida Partnership for School Readiness, Inc., which shall
26 make funding for the program available to each school
27 readiness coalition.

28 (2) The purposes of the Florida Parents as Teachers
29 Program are:

30 (a) To provide parents with the latest information on
31 child development from birth to 5 years of age and suggest

1 learning opportunities, based on the latest brain-development
2 research, that encourage language and intellectual growth and
3 the development of physical and social skills.

4 (b) To provide all families within the jurisdiction of
5 the school readiness coalition with the opportunity to have
6 their children screened for school readiness, either through
7 the child's participation in a children first plan program or
8 by payment of a nominal fee, at the ages of 3 1/2 years and 4
9 1/2 years.

10 (3) The Florida Parents as Teachers Program shall
11 include personalized home visits by certified parent educators
12 trained in child development, to help parents understand what
13 to expect during each stage of their child's development and
14 to offer practical tips on how to encourage learning, manage
15 behavior, and promote strong parent-child relationships. The
16 program shall also include group meetings, periodic
17 screenings, a resource network, and followup studies,
18 including tracking the school readiness screenings
19 administered after the child is in kindergarten, to measure
20 school readiness outcomes.

21 Section 5. School Readiness Program Needs-Assessment
22 Conference.--

23 (1) DUTIES.--

24 (a) The School Readiness Program Needs-Assessment
25 Conference shall develop official information relating to the
26 state's system of school readiness program services, including
27 forecasts of school readiness program needs, as the conference
28 determines is needed for the state planning and budgeting
29 system. Such official information must include, but need not
30 be limited to, subsidized child care, Head Start,
31 prekindergarten early intervention, prekindergarten

1 disabilities, Even-Start literacy, First Start, migrant
2 prekindergarten, and Title I prekindergarten needs.

3 (b) In addition, the School Readiness Program
4 Needs-Assessment Conference shall estimate the unduplicated
5 count of children eligible for school readiness program
6 services.

7 (c) The Florida Partnership for School Readiness,
8 Inc., shall provide information on needs and waiting lists for
9 school readiness program services requested by the School
10 Readiness Program Needs-Assessment Conference or individual
11 conference principals, in a timely manner.

12 (2) PRINCIPALS.--The Executive Office of the Governor,
13 the Director of Economic and Demographic Research, and
14 professional staff, who have forecasting expertise, from the
15 Florida Partnership for School Readiness, Inc., the Department
16 of Children and Family Services, the Department of Education,
17 the Senate, and the House of Representatives, or their
18 designees, are the principals of the School Readiness Program
19 Needs-Assessment Conference. The principal representing the
20 Executive Office of the Governor shall preside over sessions
21 of the conference.

22 Section 6. Subsection (2) of section 414.026, Florida
23 Statutes, 1998 Supplement, is amended to read:

24 414.026 WAGES Program State Board of Directors.--

25 (2)(a) The board of directors shall be composed of the
26 following members:

27 1. The Commissioner of Education, or the
28 commissioner's designee.

29 2. The Secretary of Children and Family Services.

30 3. The Secretary of Health.

31 4. The Secretary of Labor and Employment Security.

- 1 5. The Secretary of Community Affairs.
- 2 6. The Secretary of Transportation, or the secretary's
- 3 designee.
- 4 7. The director of the Office of Tourism, Trade, and
- 5 Economic Development.
- 6 8. The chairperson of the Florida Partnership for
- 7 School Readiness, Inc.
- 8 ~~9.8.~~ The president of the Enterprise Florida workforce
- 9 development board, established under s. 288.9620.
- 10 ~~10.9.~~ The chief executive officer of the Florida
- 11 Tourism Industry Marketing Corporation, established under s.
- 12 288.1226.
- 13 ~~11.10.~~ Nine members appointed by the Governor, as
- 14 follows:
- 15 a. Six members shall be appointed from a list of ten
- 16 nominees, of which five must be submitted by the President of
- 17 the Senate and five must be submitted by the Speaker of the
- 18 House of Representatives. The list of five nominees submitted
- 19 by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of
- 20 Representatives must each contain at least three individuals
- 21 employed in the private sector, two of whom must have
- 22 management experience. One of the five nominees submitted by
- 23 the President of the Senate and one of the five nominees
- 24 submitted by the Speaker of the House of Representatives must
- 25 be an elected local government official who shall serve as an
- 26 ex officio nonvoting member.
- 27 b. Three members shall be at-large members appointed
- 28 by the Governor.
- 29 c. Of the nine members appointed by the Governor, at
- 30 least six must be employed in the private sector and of these,
- 31 at least five must have management experience.

1
2 The members appointed by the Governor shall be appointed to
3 4-year, staggered terms. Within 60 days after a vacancy occurs
4 on the board, the Governor shall fill the vacancy of a member
5 appointed from the nominees submitted by the President of the
6 Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives for the
7 remainder of the unexpired term from one nominee submitted by
8 the President of the Senate and one nominee submitted by the
9 Speaker of the House of Representatives. Within 60 days after
10 a vacancy of a member appointed at-large by the Governor
11 occurs on the board, the Governor shall fill the vacancy for
12 the remainder of the unexpired term. The composition of the
13 board must generally reflect the racial, gender, and ethnic
14 diversity of the state as a whole.

15 (b) The board of directors shall annually elect a
16 chairperson from among the members appointed by the Governor.
17 The board of directors shall meet at least once each quarter.
18 A member appointed by the Governor may not authorize a
19 designee to attend a meeting of the board in place of the
20 member. The Governor may remove an appointed member for cause,
21 and an absence from three consecutive meetings results in
22 automatic removal, unless the member is excused by the
23 chairperson.

24 (c) Members of the board shall serve without
25 compensation, but are entitled to reimbursement for per diem
26 and travel expenses as provided in s. 112.061.

27 Section 7. Paragraph (a) of subsection (2) of section
28 624.91, Florida Statutes, 1998 Supplement, is amended to read:

29 624.91 The Florida Healthy Kids Corporation Act.--

30 (2) LEGISLATIVE INTENT.--

31

1 (a) The Legislature finds that increased access to
2 health care services could improve children's health and
3 reduce the incidence and costs of childhood illness and
4 disabilities among children in this state. Many children do
5 not have comprehensive, affordable health care services
6 available. It is the intent of the Legislature that the
7 Florida Healthy Kids Corporation provide comprehensive health
8 insurance coverage to such children. The corporation is
9 encouraged to cooperate with any existing health service
10 programs funded by the public or the private sector and to
11 work cooperatively with the Florida Partnership for School
12 Readiness, Inc.

13 Section 8. Nothing in this act shall have the effect
14 of increasing the standards that must be met by family child
15 care providers; however, children who receive child care
16 services from family child care providers will participate in
17 school readiness assessment upon entering public or private
18 kindergarten or the first grade.

19 Section 9. Effective July 1, 1999, subsection (4) of
20 section 411.222, Florida Statutes, is repealed.

21 Section 10. Except as otherwise expressly provided in
22 this act, this act shall take effect upon becoming a law.
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SENATE SUMMARY

Creates the School Readiness Act. Establishes the Florida Partnership for School Readiness, Inc., to act as a nonprofit corporation in administering a state school readiness program. Provides for the School Readiness Governing Board to be appointed and to direct the partnership. Specifies the responsibilities and duties of the partnership and governing board. Requires that the partnership prepare a system for measuring school readiness. Requires that an independent entity evaluate the measurement system. Authorizes the partnership to adopt rules. Provides for the voluntary establishment of a school readiness coalition in each county. Specifies the services to be provided by the coalitions. Requires that the Department of Education adopt the school readiness screening instruments developed by the Florida Partnership for School Readiness, Inc. Establishes the Florida Parents as Teachers Program under the jurisdiction of the School Readiness Partnership. Provides program requirements. Creates the School Readiness Program Needs-Assessment Conference to develop information relating to the school readiness programs. Provides for the chairperson of the Florida Partnership for School Readiness, Inc., to serve on the WAGES Program State Board of Directors. Exempts family child care providers from increased standards. Abolishes the State Coordinating Council for Early Childhood Services. (See bill for details.)