

By Representatives Russell, Byrd, Murman, Stafford,  
Fuller, Littlefield and Kelly

1                                   A bill to be entitled  
2           An act relating to children; providing for  
3           early-intervention for certain children who are  
4           born visually impaired or blind; requiring a  
5           report; providing an appropriation; providing  
6           an effective date.

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8 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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10           Section 1. The Legislature finds that all newborns  
11 must have a healthy start in life, including babies who are  
12 born visually impaired or blind. Early-intervention services  
13 at the youngest age greatly improve a child's chances for  
14 success in life and reduce the severity of long-term  
15 disabilities resulting from babies not developing normally. It  
16 is critical to teach parents and caregivers of newborns who  
17 are born blind or with visual impairment the skills to assist  
18 them so they do not miss critical developmental stages that  
19 are normally dependent on vision.

20           Section 2. (1) The Blind Babies Program is created  
21 within the Division of Blind Services of the Department of  
22 Labor and Employment Security to provide community-based  
23 early-intervention education to parents and caregivers of  
24 visually impaired or blind babies, from birth through 5 years  
25 of age, through community-based provider organizations.

26           (2) The program is not an entitlement and must be made  
27 available on a means basis only. The division shall develop a  
28 formula for eligibility based on financial means and may  
29 create a means-based matrix to set a co-payment fee for  
30 families having sufficient financial means.

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