

1                                   A bill to be entitled  
2           An act relating to the care of children;  
3           amending s. 39.5085, F.S., relating to the  
4           Relative Caregiver Program; revising  
5           eligibility guidelines; amending s. 239.117,  
6           F.S., relating to workforce development  
7           postsecondary student fees; exempting from the  
8           payment of specified fees otherwise eligible  
9           students for whom the state is paying a  
10          relative caregiver payment; revising  
11          eligibility requirements for such students and  
12          for certain other students who are eligible to  
13          receive this exemption; amending s. 240.35,  
14          F.S.; exempting certain children in the custody  
15          of a relative at the time of reaching age 18  
16          from payment of all undergraduate student fees;  
17          amending s. 411.01, F.S.; providing eligibility  
18          under the school readiness program for certain  
19          children for whom the state is paying a  
20          relative caregiver payment; providing an  
21          effective date.

22  
23 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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25           Section 1. Paragraph (a) of subsection (2) of section  
26   39.5085, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:  
27           39.5085 Relative Caregiver Program.--  
28           (2)(a) The Department of Children and Family Services  
29   shall establish and operate the Relative Caregiver Program  
30   pursuant to eligibility guidelines established in this section  
31   as further implemented by rule of the department. The Relative

1 Caregiver Program shall, within the limits of available  
2 funding, provide financial assistance to:

3 1. Relatives who are within the fifth degree by blood  
4 or marriage to the parent or stepparent of a child and who are  
5 caring full-time for that dependent child in the role of  
6 substitute parent as a result of a court's determination of  
7 child abuse, neglect, or abandonment and subsequent placement  
8 with the relative pursuant to this chapter.

9 2. Relatives who are within the fifth degree by blood  
10 or marriage to the parent or stepparent of a child and who are  
11 caring full-time for that dependent child, and a dependent  
12 half-brother or half-sister of that dependent child, in the  
13 role of substitute parent as a result of a court's  
14 determination of child abuse, neglect, or abandonment and  
15 subsequent placement with the relative pursuant to this  
16 chapter.

17  
18 Such placement may be either court-ordered temporary legal  
19 custody to the relative under protective supervision of the  
20 department pursuant to s. 39.521(1)(b)3., or court-ordered  
21 placement in the home of a relative as a permanency option  
22 pursuant to s. 39.622. The Relative Caregiver Program shall  
23 offer financial assistance to caregivers who are relatives and  
24 who would be unable to serve in that capacity without the  
25 relative caregiver payment because of financial burden, thus  
26 exposing the child to the trauma of placement in a shelter or  
27 in foster care.

28 Section 2. Paragraph (c) of subsection (4) of section  
29 239.117, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

30 239.117 Workforce development postsecondary student  
31 fees.--

1 (4) The following students are exempt from the payment  
2 of registration, matriculation, and laboratory fees:

3 (c) A student for whom the state is paying a foster  
4 care board payment pursuant to s. 409.145(3) or ~~pursuant to~~  
5 ~~parts II and III of chapter 39~~ for whom the permanency  
6 planning goal pursuant to ~~part III of chapter 39~~ is long-term  
7 foster care or independent living, or is or was at the time he  
8 or she reached 18 years of age in the custody of a relative  
9 under s. 39.5085, or who is adopted from the Department of  
10 Children and Family Services after May 5, 1997. Such an  
11 exemption includes fees associated with enrollment in  
12 vocational-preparatory instruction and completion of the  
13 college-level communication and computation skills testing  
14 program. Such an exemption is ~~shall be~~ available to any  
15 student adopted from the Department of Children and Family  
16 Services after May 5, 1997; however, the exemption remains  
17 ~~shall be~~ valid for no more than 4 years after the date of  
18 graduation from high school.

19 Section 3. Paragraph (a) of subsection (2) of section  
20 240.35, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

21 240.35 Student fees.--Unless otherwise provided, the  
22 provisions of this section apply only to fees charged for  
23 college credit instruction leading to an associate in arts  
24 degree, an associate in applied science degree, or an  
25 associate in science degree and noncollege credit  
26 college-preparatory courses defined in s. 239.105.

27 (2)(a) Any student for whom the state is paying a  
28 foster care board payment pursuant to s. 409.145(3) ~~or parts~~  
29 ~~II and III of chapter 39~~, for whom the permanency planning  
30 goal pursuant to ~~part III of chapter 39~~ is long-term foster  
31 care or independent living, who is or was at the time he or

1 she reached 18 years of age in the custody of a relative under  
2 s. 39.5085, or who is adopted from the Department of Children  
3 and Family Services after May 5, 1997, shall be exempt from  
4 the payment of all undergraduate fees, including fees  
5 associated with enrollment in college-preparatory instruction  
6 or completion of the college-level communication and  
7 computation skills testing program. Before a fee exemption can  
8 be given, the student shall have applied for and been denied  
9 financial aid, pursuant to s. 240.404, which would have  
10 provided, at a minimum, payment of all student fees. Such  
11 exemption shall be available to any student who was in the  
12 custody of a relative under s. 39.5085 at the time he or she  
13 reached 18 years of age or was adopted from the Department of  
14 Children and Family Services after May 5, 1997; however, the  
15 exemption shall be valid for no more than 4 years after the  
16 date of graduation from high school.

17 Section 4. Paragraph (a) of subsection (6) of section  
18 411.01, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

19 411.01 Florida Partnership for School Readiness;  
20 school readiness coalitions.--

21 (6) PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY.--The school readiness program  
22 shall be established for children under the age of  
23 kindergarten eligibility. Priority for participation in the  
24 school readiness program shall be given to children who meet  
25 one or more of the following criteria:

26 (a) Children under the age of kindergarten eligibility  
27 who are:

28 1. Children determined to be at risk of abuse,  
29 neglect, or exploitation and who are currently clients of the  
30 Family Safety Program Office of the Department of Children and  
31 Family Services.

1           2. Children at risk of welfare dependency, including  
2 economically disadvantaged children, children of participants  
3 in the welfare transition program, children of migrant  
4 farmworkers, and children of teen parents.

5           3. Children of working families whose family income  
6 does not exceed 150 percent of the federal poverty level.

7           4. Children for whom the state is paying a relative  
8 caregiver payment under s. 39.5085.

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10 An "economically disadvantaged" child means a child whose  
11 family income is below 150 percent of the federal poverty  
12 level. Notwithstanding any change in a family's economic  
13 status, but subject to additional family contributions in  
14 accordance with the sliding fee scale, a child who meets the  
15 eligibility requirements upon initial registration for the  
16 program shall be considered eligible until the child reaches  
17 kindergarten age.

18           Section 5. This act shall take effect July 1, 2002.