

By Senator Garcia

40-964-03

See HB 193

1                                   A bill to be entitled  
2           An act relating to school readiness programs;  
3           amending s. 411.01, F.S., relating to the  
4           Florida Partnership for School Readiness and  
5           school readiness coalitions; requiring plans  
6           for implementing school readiness programs to  
7           provide access to school-based prekindergarten  
8           programs for all 4-year-old children at no cost  
9           to the children's parents; providing for  
10          funding; providing an effective date.

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

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14           Section 1. Paragraph (d) of subsection (5) and  
15 subsection (6) of section 411.01, Florida Statutes, are  
16 amended to read:

17           411.01 Florida Partnership for School Readiness;  
18 school readiness coalitions.--

19           (5) CREATION OF SCHOOL READINESS COALITIONS.--

20           (d) Implementation.--

21           1. The school readiness program is to be phased in.  
22 Until the coalition implements its plan, the county shall  
23 continue to receive the services identified in subsection (3)  
24 through the various agencies that would be responsible for  
25 delivering those services under current law. Plan  
26 implementation is subject to approval of the coalition and the  
27 plan by the Florida Partnership for School Readiness.

28           2. Each school readiness coalition shall develop a  
29 plan for implementing the school readiness program to meet the  
30 requirements of this section and the performance standards and  
31 outcome measures established by the partnership. The plan must

1 include a written description of the role of the program in  
2 the coalition's effort to meet the first state education goal,  
3 readiness to start school, including a description of the plan  
4 to involve the prekindergarten early intervention programs,  
5 Head Start Programs, programs offered by public or private  
6 providers of child care, preschool programs for children with  
7 disabilities, programs for migrant children, Title I programs,  
8 subsidized child care programs, and teen parent programs. The  
9 plan must also demonstrate how the program will ensure that  
10 each 3-year-old and 4-year-old child in a publicly funded  
11 school readiness program receives scheduled activities and  
12 instruction designed to prepare children to enter kindergarten  
13 ready to learn. Prior to implementation of the program, the  
14 school readiness coalition must submit the plan to the  
15 partnership for approval. The partnership may approve the  
16 plan, reject the plan, or approve the plan with conditions.  
17 The Florida Partnership for School Readiness shall review  
18 coalition plans at least annually.

19 3. The plan for the school readiness program must  
20 include the following minimum standards and provisions:

21 a. A sliding fee scale establishing a copayment for  
22 parents based upon their ability to pay, which is the same for  
23 all program providers, to be implemented and reflected in each  
24 program's budget, provided that school-based prekindergarten  
25 programs shall be available to all 4-year-old children at no  
26 cost to the children's parents.

27 b. A choice of settings and locations in licensed,  
28 registered, religious-exempt, or school-based programs to be  
29 provided to parents.

30 c. Instructional staff who have completed the training  
31 course as required in s. 402.305(2)(d)1., as well as staff who

1 have additional training or credentials as required by the  
2 partnership. The plan must provide a method for assuring the  
3 qualifications of all personnel in all program settings.

4 d. Specific eligibility priorities for children within  
5 the coalition's county pursuant to subsection (6).

6 e. Performance standards and outcome measures  
7 established by the partnership or alternatively, standards and  
8 outcome measures to be used until such time as the partnership  
9 adopts such standards and outcome measures.

10 f. Reimbursement rates that have been developed by the  
11 coalition. Reimbursement rates shall not have the effect of  
12 limiting parental choice or creating standards or levels of  
13 services that have not been authorized by the Legislature.

14 g. Systems support services, including a central  
15 agency, child care resource and referral, eligibility  
16 determinations, training of providers, and parent support and  
17 involvement.

18 h. Direct enhancement services to families and  
19 children. System support and direct enhancement services shall  
20 be in addition to payments for the placement of children in  
21 school readiness programs.

22 i. A business plan, which must include the contract  
23 with a school readiness agent if the coalition is not a  
24 legally established corporate entity. Coalitions may contract  
25 with other coalitions to achieve efficiency in multiple-county  
26 services, and such contracts may be part of the coalition's  
27 business plan.

28 j. Strategies to meet the needs of unique populations,  
29 such as migrant workers.

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1 As part of the plan, the coalition may request the Governor to  
2 apply for a waiver to allow the coalition to administer the  
3 Head Start Program to accomplish the purposes of the school  
4 readiness program. If any school readiness plan can  
5 demonstrate that specific statutory goals can be achieved more  
6 effectively by using procedures that require modification of  
7 existing rules, policies, or procedures, a request for a  
8 waiver to the partnership may be made as part of the plan.  
9 Upon review, the partnership may grant the proposed  
10 modification.

11 4. Persons with an early childhood teaching  
12 certificate may provide support and supervision to other staff  
13 in the school readiness program.

14 5. The coalition may not implement its plan until it  
15 submits the plan to and receives approval from the  
16 partnership. Once the plan has been approved, the plan and the  
17 services provided under the plan shall be controlled by the  
18 coalition rather than by the state agencies or departments.  
19 The plan shall be reviewed and revised as necessary, but at  
20 least biennially.

21 6. The following statutes will not apply to local  
22 coalitions with approved plans: ss. 125.901(2)(a)3., 411.221,  
23 and 411.232. To facilitate innovative practices and to allow  
24 local establishment of school readiness programs, a school  
25 readiness coalition may apply to the Governor and Cabinet for  
26 a waiver of, and the Governor and Cabinet may waive, any of  
27 the provisions of ss. 411.223, 411.232, and 1003.54 if the  
28 waiver is necessary for implementation of the coalition's  
29 school readiness plan.

30 7. Two or more counties may join for the purpose of  
31 planning and implementing a school readiness program.

1           8. A coalition may, subject to approval of the  
2 partnership as part of the coalition's plan, receive  
3 subsidized child care funds for all children eligible for any  
4 federal subsidized child care program and be the provider of  
5 the program services.

6           9. Coalitions are authorized to enter into multiparty  
7 contracts with multicounty service providers in order to meet  
8 the needs of unique populations such as migrant workers.

9           (6) PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY.--The school readiness program  
10 shall be established for children under the age of  
11 kindergarten eligibility. Priority for participation in the  
12 school readiness program shall be given to children who meet  
13 one or more of the following criteria:

14           (a) Children under the age of kindergarten eligibility  
15 who are:

16           1. Children determined to be at risk of abuse,  
17 neglect, or exploitation and who are currently clients of the  
18 Family Safety Program Office of the Department of Children and  
19 Family Services.

20           2. Children at risk of welfare dependency, including  
21 economically disadvantaged children, children of participants  
22 in the welfare transition program, children of migrant  
23 farmworkers, and children of teen parents.

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

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

28           (b) Three-year-old children and 4-year-old children  
29 who may not be economically disadvantaged but who have  
30 disabilities, have been served in a specific part-time or  
31 combination of part-time exceptional education programs with

1 required special services, aids, or equipment, and were  
2 previously reported for funding part time with the Florida  
3 Education Finance Program as exceptional students.

4 (c) Economically disadvantaged children, children with  
5 disabilities, and children at risk of future school failure,  
6 from birth to 4 years of age, who are served at home through  
7 home visitor programs and intensive parent education programs  
8 such as the Florida First Start Program.

9 (d) Children who meet federal and state requirements  
10 for eligibility for the migrant preschool program but who do  
11 not meet the criteria of economically disadvantaged.

12 (e) Four-year-old children who do not meet the  
13 criteria in paragraphs (a)-(d).

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

23 Section 2. The Legislature shall appropriate funds to  
24 the Agency for Workforce Innovation for implementation of the  
25 provisions of this act.

26 Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2003.

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