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

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

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

15 411.01 Florida Partnership for School Readiness; school
 16 readiness coalitions.--

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

18 (d) *Implementation*.--

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

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



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31 coalition's effort to meet the first state education goal,
32 readiness to start school, including a description of the plan
33 to involve the prekindergarten early intervention programs, Head
34 Start Programs, programs offered by public or private providers
35 of child care, preschool programs for children with
36 disabilities, programs for migrant children, Title I programs,
37 subsidized child care programs, and teen parent programs. The
38 plan must also demonstrate how the program will ensure that each
39 3-year-old and 4-year-old child in a publicly funded school
40 readiness program receives scheduled activities and instruction
41 designed to prepare children to enter kindergarten ready to
42 learn. Prior to implementation of the program, the school
43 readiness coalition must submit the plan to the partnership for
44 approval. The partnership may approve the plan, reject the plan,
45 or approve the plan with conditions. The Florida Partnership for
46 School Readiness shall review coalition plans at least annually.

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

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

55 b. A choice of settings and locations in licensed,
56 registered, religious-exempt, or school-based programs to be
57 provided to parents.

58 c. Instructional staff who have completed the training
59 course as required in s. 402.305(2)(d)1., as well as staff who
60 have additional training or credentials as required by the



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61 partnership. The plan must provide a method for assuring the
62 qualifications of all personnel in all program settings.

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

65 e. Performance standards and outcome measures established
66 by the partnership or alternatively, standards and outcome
67 measures to be used until such time as the partnership adopts
68 such standards and outcome measures.

69 f. Reimbursement rates that have been developed by the
70 coalition. Reimbursement rates shall not have the effect of
71 limiting parental choice or creating standards or levels of
72 services that have not been authorized by the Legislature.

73 g. Systems support services, including a central agency,
74 child care resource and referral, eligibility determinations,
75 training of providers, and parent support and involvement.

76 h. Direct enhancement services to families and children.
77 System support and direct enhancement services shall be in
78 addition to payments for the placement of children in school
79 readiness programs.

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

85 j. Strategies to meet the needs of unique populations,
86 such as migrant workers.

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88 As part of the plan, the coalition may request the Governor to
89 apply for a waiver to allow the coalition to administer the Head
90 Start Program to accomplish the purposes of the school readiness



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91 program. If any school readiness plan can demonstrate that
92 specific statutory goals can be achieved more effectively by
93 using procedures that require modification of existing rules,
94 policies, or procedures, a request for a waiver to the
95 partnership may be made as part of the plan. Upon review, the
96 partnership may grant the proposed modification.

97 4. Persons with an early childhood teaching certificate
98 may provide support and supervision to other staff in the school
99 readiness program.

100 5. The coalition may not implement its plan until it
101 submits the plan to and receives approval from the partnership.
102 Once the plan has been approved, the plan and the services
103 provided under the plan shall be controlled by the coalition
104 rather than by the state agencies or departments. The plan shall
105 be reviewed and revised as necessary, but at least biennially.

106 6. The following statutes will not apply to local
107 coalitions with approved plans: ss. 125.901(2)(a)3., 411.221,
108 and 411.232. To facilitate innovative practices and to allow
109 local establishment of school readiness programs, a school
110 readiness coalition may apply to the Governor and Cabinet for a
111 waiver of, and the Governor and Cabinet may waive, any of the
112 provisions of ss. 411.223, 411.232, and 1003.54 if the waiver is
113 necessary for implementation of the coalition's school readiness
114 plan.

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

117 8. A coalition may, subject to approval of the partnership
118 as part of the coalition's plan, receive subsidized child care
119 funds for all children eligible for any federal subsidized child
120 care program and be the provider of the program services.



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

124 (6) PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY.--The school readiness program
125 shall be established for children under the age of kindergarten
126 eligibility. Priority for participation in the school readiness
127 program shall be given to children who meet one or more of the
128 following criteria:

129 (a) Children under the age of kindergarten eligibility who
130 are:

131 1. Children determined to be at risk of abuse, neglect, or
132 exploitation and who are currently clients of the Family Safety
133 Program Office of the Department of Children and Family
134 Services.

135 2. Children at risk of welfare dependency, including
136 economically disadvantaged children, children of participants in
137 the welfare transition program, children of migrant farmworkers,
138 and children of teen parents.

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

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

143 (b) Three-year-old children and 4-year-old children who
144 may not be economically disadvantaged but who have disabilities,
145 have been served in a specific part-time or combination of part-
146 time exceptional education programs with required special
147 services, aids, or equipment, and were previously reported for
148 funding part time with the Florida Education Finance Program as
149 exceptional students.



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

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

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

160
161 An "economically disadvantaged" child means a child whose family
162 income is below 150 percent of the federal poverty level.
163 Notwithstanding any change in a family's economic status, but
164 subject to additional family contributions in accordance with
165 the sliding fee scale, a child who meets the eligibility
166 requirements upon initial registration for the program shall be
167 considered eligible until the child reaches kindergarten age.

168 Section 2. The Legislature shall appropriate funds to the
169 Agency for Workforce Innovation for implementation of the
170 provisions of this act.

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