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1                   A bill to be entitled  
2           An act relating to children's zones; creating s. 409.147,  
3           F.S.; providing legislative findings and intent;  
4           establishing the Magic City Children's Zone pilot project;  
5           providing for management by an entity organized as a  
6           corporation not for profit; providing purposes for the  
7           project; providing geographic boundaries for the zone;  
8           providing for election of a board of directors; requiring  
9           the board to enter into a contract to develop a business  
10          plan; providing an effective date.

11  
12          WHEREAS, the State of Florida is often referred to as the  
13          Sunshine State, a term that suggests warm weather, a carefree  
14          lifestyle, and unlimited potential for nurturing hope and  
15          realizing dreams for a fulfilling and productive life, and

16          WHEREAS, communities within the state suffering from  
17          fragile infrastructures and multiple social ills are home to  
18          families for whom those obstacles limit, or completely preclude,  
19          their ability to create a good quality of life for themselves  
20          and for their children, and

21          WHEREAS, a proposed community initiative known as a  
22          children's zone, which is modeled after the long-established and  
23          successful Harlem Children's Zone, seeks to change that  
24          experience, and

25          WHEREAS, the initiative will be based on the belief that in  
26          order to help children from troubled communities become healthy  
27          adults and responsible, fulfilled members of their communities,  
28          two things must happen: first, they must be surrounded by a

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29 | critical mass of adults who are effective parents engaged in  
 30 | activities with their children and second, early in their lives,  
 31 | they must be exposed to sound health care, intellectual and  
 32 | social stimulation, and consistent guidance from loving,  
 33 | attentive adults, and

34 |       WHEREAS, the initiative seeks to establish a comprehensive,  
 35 | community-based, coordinated, and targeted system of strategies  
 36 | and services to revitalize communities with an increased sense  
 37 | of culture, pride, and togetherness; to support parents; and to  
 38 | provide comprehensive care for all children within the zone,  
 39 | NOW, THEREFORE,

41 | Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

43 |       Section 1. Section 409.147, Florida Statutes, is created  
 44 | to read:

45 |       409.147 Children's zones.--

46 |       (1) LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS AND INTENT.--

47 |       (a) The Legislature finds that:

48 |       1. There are neighborhoods in Florida where conditions and  
 49 | opportunities that middle-class communities take for granted,  
 50 | such as quality schools, useable playgrounds, support from  
 51 | religious institutions, functioning civic organizations, and  
 52 | safe streets, are nonexistent or so marginal that they are  
 53 | ineffective.

54 |       2. The vibrancy of these neighborhoods is further  
 55 | compromised by adult illiteracy, high unemployment, low incomes,  
 56 | high crime rates, and the lack of safe, affordable housing.

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57        3. Children in these neighborhoods attend a  
58 prekindergarten education program and are read to by an adult on  
59 a regular basis at a much lower rate than children in other  
60 communities. They experience below-average performance on  
61 standardized tests and graduate from high school in fewer  
62 numbers. Most are eligible for the free or reduced-price school  
63 lunch program.

64        4. Children in these neighborhoods often suffer from high  
65 rates of asthma, a higher risk of lead poisoning, and inadequate  
66 health care, and they are routinely exposed to violence and  
67 crime.

68        5. In spite of these obstacles, most of these  
69 neighborhoods are rich in diversity and are inhabited by  
70 families representing many cultures, languages, belief systems,  
71 and life experiences and residents who are individuals with  
72 tremendous talents, strengths, and resiliency.

73        6. These communities are also many times home to leaders,  
74 stakeholders, and institutions that are committed to making a  
75 difference in the lives of children and their families.

76        (b) It is therefore the intent of the Legislature to  
77 assist these disadvantaged areas within the state in creating a  
78 full-service community network that includes preschools,  
79 schools, after-school programs, community centers, places of  
80 worship, and housing and employment initiatives. The Legislature  
81 further intends that these zones shall function as models that  
82 effectively develop, coordinate, and deliver integrated support  
83 and services to support family stability through the  
84 availability of quality education, accessible health care, youth

85 development programs, opportunities for employment, and safe and  
 86 affordable housing for children and families living within its  
 87 boundaries.

88 (2) MAGIC CITY CHILDREN'S ZONE, INC., PILOT PROJECT.--

89 (a) There is created within the Liberty City neighborhood  
 90 in Miami-Dade County a 10-year pilot project zone that, within 3  
 91 months after the effective date of this act, shall be managed by  
 92 an entity organized as a corporation not for profit incorporated  
 93 under the provisions of chapter 617 and approved by the  
 94 Secretary of State. The zone shall be known as the Magic City  
 95 Children's Zone, Inc.

96 (b) The purpose of the pilot project is to develop a new  
 97 social service paradigm intended to overcome the limitations of  
 98 traditional approaches by systematically coordinating programs  
 99 that are focused on addressing the critical needs of children  
 100 and their families and targeted efforts to rebuild the basic  
 101 infrastructure of the community.

102 (c) Creation of the pilot project zone allows the paradigm  
 103 to be applied to an area that is large enough to include all of  
 104 the necessary components of community life, including, but not  
 105 limited to, schools, places of worship, recreational facilities,  
 106 commercial areas, and common space, yet small enough to allow  
 107 programs and services to reach every willing member of the  
 108 neighborhood. Therefore, the geographic boundaries of the pilot  
 109 project zone are:

- 110 1. Northwest 79th Street to the North;
- 111 2. Northwest 54th Street to the South;
- 112 3. North Miami Avenue to the East; and

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113 4. Northwest 27th Avenue to the West.

114 (d) Programs within the pilot project zone shall support  
115 the fact that funding is most effective when spent on  
116 prevention. Effective early intervention results in long-term  
117 benefits by making later interventions less necessary for many  
118 children and adolescents and by making those later interventions  
119 more likely to be successful when they are needed.

120 (e) After incorporation, the incorporators shall hold an  
121 organizational meeting at the call of a majority of the  
122 incorporators to elect a board of directors who shall complete  
123 the organization of the corporation.

124 (f) The board shall enter into a contract with a  
125 management consultant with experience working with social  
126 service and educational entities to develop a 10-year business  
127 plan to carry out the provisions of this section.

128 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2007.