

1 A bill to be entitled
 2 An act relating to child care; creating s. 402.3012, F.S.;
 3 providing for the Office of Early Learning within the
 4 Agency for Workforce Innovation to establish Florida's
 5 Sunshine State Stars Quality Rating System, subject to
 6 specific appropriation; providing for the rating system to
 7 be voluntary; providing quality rating requirements for
 8 early learning programs, child care facilities, and
 9 facilities participating in the Voluntary Prekindergarten
 10 Education Program; establishing a voluntary pilot program
 11 in specified counties; providing financial incentives for
 12 advancement in quality rating; providing for technical
 13 support; providing for expiration of the program;
 14 requiring the Office of Early Learning within the Agency
 15 for Workforce Innovation to develop an early education
 16 workforce development plan; providing an effective date.

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

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 20 Section 1. Section 402.3012, Florida Statutes, is created
 21 to read:

22 402.3012 Florida's Sunshine State Stars Quality Rating
 23 System.--

24 (1) FLORIDA'S SUNSHINE STATE STARS QUALITY RATING
 25 SYSTEM.--Subject to specific legislative appropriation, the
 26 Office of Early Learning within the Agency for Workforce
 27 Innovation shall establish Florida's Sunshine State Stars
 28 Quality Rating System to provide a voluntary, statewide standard

29 rating system for licensed early learning programs, child care
 30 facilities as defined in s. 402.302, and facilities
 31 participating in the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program
 32 created under s. 1002.53.

33 (a) The rating system shall consist of five tiers. For the
 34 purposes of this section, a "tier" refers to each level of
 35 progression and represents a higher level of quality within the
 36 quality rating system. To communicate the level of quality to
 37 parents, consumers, and the participating early learning
 38 programs, a star symbol shall be used. Programs that meet the
 39 highest level of quality in the rating system shall be awarded
 40 five stars.

41 (b) Programs must meet all the criteria of a tier before
 42 advancing to the next tier. The office shall be responsible for
 43 implementing the requirements for each tier in each category
 44 based upon recommendations of the Early Learning Advisory
 45 Council's Quality Rating System Task Force and recommendations
 46 from organized meetings and interviews conducted to gather local
 47 input from parent and provider focus groups.

48 (2) REQUIREMENTS FOR CHILD CARE FACILITIES AND FACILITIES
 49 PARTICIPATING IN THE VOLUNTARY PREKINDERGARTEN EDUCATION
 50 PROGRAM.--

51 (a) Overall quality rating assessments shall be based on
 52 the following major components that have been documented by
 53 research or best practices to positively impact child and family
 54 outcomes:

- 55 1. Learning environment.
- 56 2. Curricula, screening, and assessment.

- 57 | 3. Staff qualifications.
- 58 | 4. Professional development.
- 59 | 5. Business practices.
- 60 | 6. Family involvement.

61 | (b) Advancement through the tiers in each major component
 62 | shall be based on the following:

- 63 | 1. Learning environment, verified through document
 64 | submission or use of an appropriate environment rating scale.
- 65 | 2. Curricula, screening, and assessment, verified through
 66 | document review and observation.
- 67 | 3. Staff qualifications, verified by linkage with
 68 | licensing and document review.
- 69 | 4. Professional development for the director, lead
 70 | teacher, and assistant teacher, verified by linkage with
 71 | licensing and document review.
- 72 | 5. Business practices, verified by document review and
 73 | observation. Consideration shall be given to child care
 74 | providers possessing a Gold Seal Quality Care designation and
 75 | Head Start and Early Head Start programs of quality and
 76 | excellence.
- 77 | 6. Family involvement, verified through document review.

78 | Section 2. Florida's Sunshine State Stars Quality Rating
 79 | System Voluntary Pilot Program.--

80 | (1) FLORIDA'S SUNSHINE STATE STARS QUALITY RATING SYSTEM
 81 | VOLUNTARY PILOT PROGRAM.--Subject to specific legislative
 82 | appropriation, Florida's Sunshine State Stars Quality Rating
 83 | System Voluntary Pilot Program is created for the implementation
 84 | of the rating system tier program in the following counties:

85 Broward, Duval, Hillsborough, Leon, Miami-Dade, Orange, Palm
 86 Beach, and Pinellas. The identified counties include urban
 87 counties and rural counties that have established or are in the
 88 process of establishing quality rating systems.

89 (2) FINANCIAL INCENTIVES FOR ADVANCEMENT IN THE RATING
 90 SYSTEM.--

91 (a) Centers and programs in tiers 1, 2, and 3 shall be
 92 eligible for grants and awards to improve the quality of their
 93 programs, subject to appropriation.

94 (b) Centers and programs in tiers 4 and 5 shall be
 95 eligible for merit awards to maintain high quality programs,
 96 subject to appropriation.

97 (3) TECHNICAL SUPPORT.--Subject to specific legislative
 98 appropriation, technical support shall be provided to programs
 99 to ensure successful entry into the rating system and movement
 100 through the system. The Office of Early Learning within the
 101 Agency for Workforce Innovation shall coordinate with the
 102 participating early learning coalitions to facilitate the
 103 successful participation of child care facilities in the pilot
 104 program and with those programs currently implementing a quality
 105 rating system.

106 (4) OTHER COUNTIES.--Nothing in this section shall
 107 preclude early learning coalitions from implementing a quality
 108 rating system in other counties.

109 (5) EXPIRATION OF THE PILOT PROGRAM.--The pilot program
 110 shall expire on July 1, 2009.

111 Section 3. In order to ensure the availability of
 112 qualified teachers to meet the needs associated with higher

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113 standards, the Office of Early Learning within the Agency for
114 Workforce Innovation, in collaboration with the Department of
115 Education and the Department of Children and Family Services,
116 shall develop an early education workforce development plan. The
117 plan shall include recommendations for the funding and expansion
118 of current child care professional development credentialing
119 programs, such as the Teacher Education and Compensation Helps
120 (TEACH) scholarship program, as well as other programs designed
121 to provide professional development, credentialing, and advanced
122 education.

123 Section 4. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.