

By Senator Rich

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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.

17

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 Quality

28 Rating System to provide a voluntary, statewide standard rating

29 system for licensed early learning programs, child care

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30 facilities as defined in s. 402.302, and facilities participating
31 in the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program created under
32 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.

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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 licensing
68 and document review.

69 4. Professional development for the director, lead teacher,
70 and assistant teacher, verified by linkage with licensing and
71 document review.

72 5. Business practices, verified by document review and
73 observation. Consideration shall be given to child care providers
74 possessing a Gold Seal Quality Care designation and Head Start
75 and Early Head Start programs of quality and excellence.

76 6. Family involvement, verified through document review.

77 Section 2. Florida's Sunshine State Stars Quality Rating
78 System voluntary pilot program.--

79 (1) FLORIDA'S SUNSHINE STATE STARS QUALITY RATING SYSTEM
80 VOLUNTARY PILOT PROGRAM.--Subject to specific legislative
81 appropriation, Florida's Sunshine State Stars Quality Rating
82 System Voluntary Pilot Program is created for the implementation
83 of the rating system tier program in the following counties:
84 Broward, Duval, Hillsborough, Leon, Miami-Dade, Orange, Palm
85 Beach, and Pinellas. The identified counties include urban
86 counties and rural counties that have established or are in the
87 process of establishing quality rating systems.

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

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

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

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

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

108 (5) EXPIRATION OF THE PILOT PROGRAM.--The pilot program
109 shall expire on July 1, 2010.

110 Section 3. In order to ensure the availability of qualified
111 teachers to meet the needs associated with higher standards, the
112 Office of Early Learning within the Agency for Workforce
113 Innovation, in collaboration with the Department of Education and
114 the Department of Children and Family Services, shall develop an
115 early education workforce development plan. The plan shall
116 include recommendations for the funding and expansion of current

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117 | child care professional development credentialing programs, such
118 | as the Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (TEACH)
119 | scholarship program, as well as other programs designed to
120 | provide professional development, credentialing, and advanced
121 | education.

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