

By the Committee on Fiscal Policy; and Senator Calatayud

594-03696-25

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A bill to be entitled
An act relating to the school readiness program;
amending s. 1002.87, F.S.; revising the criteria for a
child to receive priority for participation in the
school readiness program; amending s. 1002.89, F.S.;
providing requirements for a school readiness program
provider to be eligible for specified funding
beginning on a specified date; providing an effective
date.

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

Section 1. Paragraph (c) of subsection (1) and subsection
(2) of section 1002.87, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:
1002.87 School readiness program; eligibility and
enrollment.—

(1) Each early learning coalition shall give priority for
participation in the school readiness program as follows:

(c) Subsequent priority shall be given, based on the early
learning coalition's local priorities identified under s.
1002.85(2)(i), to children who meet the following criteria:

1. A child from birth to the beginning of the school year
for which the child is eligible for admission to kindergarten in
a public school under s. 1003.21(1)(a)2. who is from a working
family that is economically disadvantaged, and may include such
child's eligible siblings, beginning with the school year in
which the sibling is eligible for admission to kindergarten in a
public school under s. 1003.21(1)(a)2. until the beginning of
the school year in which the sibling is eligible to begin 6th

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grade, provided that the first priority for funding an eligible sibling is local revenues available to the coalition for funding direct services.

2. A child of a parent who transitions from the work program into employment as described in s. 445.032 from birth to the beginning of the school year for which the child is eligible for admission to kindergarten in a public school under s. 1003.21(1)(a)2.

3. An at-risk child who is at least 9 years of age but younger than 13 years of age. An at-risk child whose sibling is enrolled in the school readiness program within an eligibility priority category listed in paragraphs (a) and (b) and subparagraph 1. shall be given priority over other children who are eligible under this paragraph.

4. A child who is younger than 13 years of age from a working family that is economically disadvantaged.

5. A child of a parent who transitions from the work program into employment as described in s. 445.032 who is younger than 13 years of age.

6. A child who has special needs ~~and~~, has been determined eligible as a student who requires additional accommodations beyond those required by the Americans with Disabilities Act. The child's special needs and associated accommodations must be validated by a licensed health care professional, a licensed mental health professional, or an educational psychologist. Such person may not be the child's parent or relative or a person employed by a child care provider. The following documentation must be used to determine the child's eligibility for such accommodations:

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59 a. ~~with a disability, has~~ A current individual education
60 plan with a Florida school district;~~, and is not younger than 3~~
61 ~~years of age.~~

62 b. A current individualized family support plan;

63 c. A diagnosed special need; or

64 d. A written determination of required accommodations by a
65 licensed health care professional, a licensed mental health
66 professional, or an educational psychologist ~~needs child~~
67 ~~eligible under this paragraph remains eligible until the child~~
68 ~~is eligible for admission to kindergarten in a public school~~
69 ~~under s. 1003.21(1)(a)2.~~

70 7. A child who otherwise meets one of the eligibility
71 criteria in paragraphs (a) and (b) and subparagraphs 1. and 2.
72 but who is also enrolled concurrently in the federal Head Start
73 Program and the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program.

74 (2) A school readiness program provider may be paid only
75 for authorized hours of care provided for a child in the school
76 readiness program. A child enrolled in the Voluntary
77 Prekindergarten Education Program may receive care from the
78 school readiness program if the child is eligible according to
79 the eligibility priorities and criteria established in
80 subsection (1). The school readiness program provider of a child
81 who meets the requirements of subsection (6) may be eligible for
82 additional funding through the special needs differential
83 allocation to implement the special needs rate as determined in
84 s. 1002.89(1)(d).

85 Section 2. Paragraph (d) of subsection (1) of section
86 1002.89, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

87 1002.89 School readiness program; funding.—

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(1) DETERMINATION OF EARLY LEARNING COALITION SCHOOL READINESS PROGRAM FUNDING.—Funding for the school readiness program shall be used by the early learning coalitions in accordance with this part and the General Appropriations Act.

(d) *Special needs differential allocation*.—There is created the special needs differential allocation to assist eligible school readiness program providers to implement the special needs rate provisions defined in the state's approved Child Care and Development Fund Plan. Subject to legislative appropriation, each early learning coalition shall be reimbursed based on actual expenditures. All expenditures from the special needs differential allocation shall be used by the department to help meet federal targeted requirements for improving quality to the extent allowable in the state's approved plan. A school readiness program provider is eligible for funding through the allocation to implement the special needs differential rate upon meeting all of the following requirements beginning July 1, 2027:

1. The provider has met or exceeded the minimum program assessment composite score required for contracting as determined by the department, as applicable.

2. Instructional staff employed or contracted by the provider has completed training on early identification of social and communication delays as specified by the department.

3. The instructor assigned by the provider to the child in need of additional accommodations under s. 1002.87(1)(c)6. has completed 10 hours of training in inclusive early childhood or inclusive school-age education practices within the first 90 days after the child's enrollment or within 90 days after the

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hiring of a new instructor assigned by the provider to a child
in need of additional accommodations under s. 1002.87(1)(c)6.

After the initial determination of eligibility, the provider
must maintain the required program composite score and the
instructor assigned by the provider to a child who needs
additional accommodations under s. 1002.87(1)(c)6. must complete
a minimum of 2 hours of relevant training in each subsequent
year after the initial determination of eligibility in order to
remain eligible to implement the special needs differential
rate.

Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2025.