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LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Senate

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House

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The Committee on Fiscal Policy (Harrell) recommended the following:

**Senate Amendment**

Delete lines 182 - 246  
and insert:  
developmental delays or disabilities a choice for such children  
to continue services in the Early Steps Program beyond the age  
of 3 years old.

(2) PURPOSE.—

(a) The purpose of the Early Steps Extended Option is to  
continue enrollment in the Early Steps Program for those



11 children who are eligible. Therefore, the provisions of s.  
12 391.308 are maintained and incorporated in the Early Steps  
13 Extended Option.

14 (b) For the purposes of this section, "child" means a child  
15 from birth until the beginning of the school year following the  
16 child's fourth birthday, as provided in 34 C.F.R. s.  
17 303.211(a)(2)(ii).

18 (3) DUTIES.—

19 (a) The department shall:

20 1. Submit its application for federal approval to extend  
21 eligibility for services under part C of the federal Individuals  
22 with Disabilities Education Act no later than July 1, 2026.

23 2. Jointly with the Department of Education, develop or  
24 amend any rule, policy, procedure, written agreement, or  
25 contract necessary to implement the Early Steps Extended Option  
26 in accordance with state law and part C of the federal  
27 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

28 3. Seek additional federal grant funds, as available, for  
29 the implementation of the Early Steps Extended Option, including  
30 a state incentive grant. However, the department may implement  
31 the Early Steps Extended Option regardless of the availability  
32 or acceptance of supplemental federal grant funds, contingent  
33 upon the appropriation of state funds.

34 (b) As part of the individualized family support plan for  
35 each child served under the Early Steps Extended Option, a local  
36 program office shall include steps for a child to transition to  
37 part B of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education  
38 Act or other future services by the beginning of the school year  
39 following the child's fourth birthday.



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40           (4) ELIGIBILITY.—The department must apply the following  
41 eligibility criteria if specific funding is provided in the  
42 General Appropriations Act:

43           (a) All of the following criteria must be met for a child  
44 to continue receiving Early Steps Program services under the  
45 Early Steps Extended Option:

46           1. The child must be determined eligible for early  
47 intervention services through the Early Steps Program at least  
48 45 days before the child's third birthday.

49           2. The child must be determined eligible for services under  
50 part B of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education  
51 Act.

52           3. Before the child's third birthday, the family must  
53 choose to continue services through the Early Steps Extended  
54 Option, which shall include an educational component to promote  
55 school readiness and incorporate pre-literacy, language, and  
56 numeracy skills.

57           (b) A child becomes ineligible to reenter the Early Steps  
58 Extended Option upon exiting the program. If a family chooses to  
59 exit the Early Steps Extended Option before the beginning of the  
60 school year following the child's fourth birthday, the local  
61 school district, in conjunction with the local program office,  
62 must notify the child's parent or legal guardian of his or her  
63 rights under part B of the federal Individuals with Disabilities  
64 Education Act.

65           (c) A child may not receive services under part B of the  
66 federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act while  
67 receiving services through the Early Steps Extended Option.

68           (d) A child may not receive a state scholarship under s.



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69 1002.394 while receiving services through the Early Steps  
70 Extended Option.

71 (5) TRANSITION TO EDUCATION.—

72 (a) At least 90 days before the beginning of the school  
73 year following the fourth birthday of a child enrolled in the  
74 Early Steps Extended Option, the