

By Senator Calatayud

38-01129B-25

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1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to access to school readiness programs
3 for economically disadvantaged households; amending s.
4 1002.81, F.S.; revising the definitions of the terms
5 "economically disadvantaged" and "single point of
6 entry"; amending s. 1002.82, F.S.; revising the
7 Department of Education's duties for adopting specific
8 program support services to coordinate a comprehensive
9 early learning program; amending s. 1002.84, F.S.;
10 revising duties of early learning coalitions relating
11 to the creation of a uniform waiting list; amending s.
12 1002.85, F.S.; revising requirements for the school
13 readiness program plan; revising data elements
14 relating to early learning programs collected by the
15 Department of Education; amending s. 1002.87, F.S.;
16 revising which groups of students receive priority in
17 a school readiness program; amending s. 1002.89, F.S.;
18 revising criteria for the determination of the annual
19 allocation for the school readiness program; providing
20 an effective date.

21
22 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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24 Section 1. Subsections (6) and (13) of section 1002.81,
25 Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

26 1002.81 Definitions.—Consistent with the requirements of 45
27 C.F.R. parts 98 and 99 and as used in this part, the term:

28 (6) "Economically disadvantaged" means having a family
29 income that does not exceed 65 percent of the state median

38-01129B-25

20251382__

30 ~~income 150 percent of the federal poverty level~~ and includes
31 being a child of a working migratory family as defined by 34
32 C.F.R. s. 200.81(d) or (f) or an agricultural worker who is
33 employed by more than one agricultural employer during the
34 course of a year, and whose income varies according to weather
35 conditions and market stability.

36 (13) "Single point of entry" means an integrated
37 information system that allows a parent to enroll his or her
38 child in the school readiness program or the Voluntary
39 Prekindergarten Education Program at various locations
40 throughout a county, that may allow a parent to enroll his or
41 her child by telephone or through a website, and that uses a
42 uniform waiting list to track ~~eligible~~ children waiting for
43 enrollment in the school readiness program based on family
44 household income and by the priorities established pursuant to
45 s. 1002.87.

46 Section 2. Paragraph (f) of subsection (2) of section
47 1002.82, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

48 1002.82 Department of Education; powers and duties.—

49 (2) The department shall:

50 (f) Establish a unified approach to the state's efforts to
51 coordinate a comprehensive early learning program. In support of
52 this effort, the department:

53 1. Shall adopt specific program support services that
54 address the state's school readiness program, including:

55 a. Statewide data information program requirements that
56 include:

57 (I) Eligibility requirements.

58 (II) Financial reports.

38-01129B-25

20251382__

59 (III) Program accountability measures.
60 (IV) Child progress reports.
61 b. Child care resource and referral services.
62 c. A single point of entry and uniform waiting list that
63 tracks children waiting for school readiness program services
64 based on family household income and by priority established
65 pursuant to s. 1002.87.

66 2. May provide technical assistance and guidance on
67 additional support services to complement the school readiness
68 program, including:

69 a. Warm-Line services.
70 b. Anti-fraud plans.
71 c. Training and support for parental involvement in
72 children's early education.
73 d. Family literacy activities and services.

74 Section 3. Subsection (2) of section 1002.84, Florida
75 Statutes, is amended to read:

76 1002.84 Early learning coalitions; school readiness powers
77 and duties.—Each early learning coalition shall:

78 (2) Establish a uniform waiting list to track eligible
79 children waiting for enrollment in the school readiness program
80 based on family household income and the priorities established
81 pursuant to s. 1002.87, and in accordance with rules adopted by
82 the State Board of Education.

83 Section 4. Paragraph (b) of subsection (2) and subsection
84 (5) of section 1002.85, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

85 1002.85 Early learning coalition plans.—

86 (2) Each early learning coalition must submit a school
87 readiness program plan every 3 years to the department before

38-01129B-25

20251382__

88 the expenditure of funds. A coalition may not implement its
89 school readiness program plan until it receives approval from
90 the department. A coalition may not implement any revision to
91 its school readiness program plan until the coalition submits
92 the revised plan to and receives approval from the department.
93 If the department rejects a plan or revision, the coalition must
94 continue to operate under its previously approved plan. The plan
95 must include, but is not limited to:

96 (b) The coalition's procedures for implementing the
97 requirements of this part, including:

- 98 1. Single point of entry.
- 99 2. Uniform waiting list that tracks children waiting for
100 school readiness program services based on family household
101 income and the priorities established under s. 1002.87.
- 102 3. Eligibility and enrollment processes and local
103 eligibility priorities for children pursuant to s. 1002.87.
- 104 4. Parent access and choice.
- 105 5. Sliding fee scale and policies on applying the waiver or
106 reduction of fees in accordance with s. 1002.84(9).
- 107 6. Use of preassessments and postassessments, as
108 applicable.
- 109 7. Use of contracted slots, as applicable, based on the
110 results of the assessment required under paragraph (i).

111 (5) The department shall collect and report data on
112 coalition delivery of early learning programs. Elements must
113 ~~shall~~ include, but are not limited to, measures related to
114 progress toward ~~towards~~ reducing the number of children on the
115 waiting list, the percentage of children served by the program
116 as compared to the number of administrative staff and overhead,

38-01129B-25

20251382__

117 the percentage of children served compared to total number of
118 children under the age of 5 years below 65 percent of the state
119 median income ~~150 percent of the federal poverty level~~, provider
120 payment processes, fraud intervention, child attendance and
121 stability, use of child care resource and referral, and
122 kindergarten readiness outcomes for children in the Voluntary
123 Prekindergarten Education Program or the school readiness
124 program upon entry into kindergarten. The department shall
125 request input from the coalitions and school readiness program
126 providers before finalizing the format and data to be used. The
127 report shall be implemented beginning July 1, 2014, and results
128 of the report must be included in the annual report under s.
129 1002.82.

130 Section 5. Paragraph (c) of subsection (1) of section
131 1002.87, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

132 1002.87 School readiness program; eligibility and
133 enrollment.—

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

136 (c) Subsequent priority shall be given, based on the early
137 learning coalition's local priorities identified under s.
138 1002.85(2)(i), to children who meet the following criteria:

139 1. A child from birth to the beginning of the school year
140 for which the child is eligible for admission to kindergarten in
141 a public school under s. 1003.21(1)(a)2. who is from a working
142 family that is economically disadvantaged, with a household
143 income less than 55 percent of the state median income, and may
144 include such child's eligible siblings, beginning with the
145 school year in which the sibling is eligible for admission to

38-01129B-25

20251382__

146 kindergarten in a public school under s. 1003.21(1)(a)2. until
147 the beginning of the school year in which the sibling is
148 eligible to begin 6th grade, provided that the first priority
149 for funding an eligible sibling is local revenues available to
150 the coalition for funding direct services.

151 2. A child from birth to the beginning of the school year
152 for which the child is eligible for admission to kindergarten in
153 a public school under s. 1003.21(1)(a)2. who is from a working
154 family that is economically disadvantaged, with a household
155 income greater than 55 percent, but less than 65 percent, of the
156 state median income, and may include such child's eligible
157 siblings, beginning with the school year in which the sibling is
158 eligible for admission to kindergarten in a public school under
159 s. 1003.21(1)(a)2. until the beginning of the school year in
160 which the sibling is eligible to begin 6th grade, provided that
161 the first priority for funding an eligible sibling is local
162 revenues available to the coalition for funding direct services.

163 3. A child of a parent who transitions from the work
164 program into employment as described in s. 445.032 from birth to
165 the beginning of the school year for which the child is eligible
166 for admission to kindergarten in a public school under s.
167 1003.21(1)(a)2.

168 ~~4.3.~~ An at-risk child who is at least 9 years of age but
169 younger than 13 years of age. An at-risk child whose sibling is
170 enrolled in the school readiness program within an eligibility
171 priority category listed in paragraphs (a) and (b) and
172 subparagraph 1. shall be given priority over other children who
173 are eligible under this paragraph.

174 ~~5.4.~~ A child who is younger than 13 years of age from a

38-01129B-25

20251382__

175 working family that is economically disadvantaged.

176 ~~6.5.~~ A child of a parent who transitions from the work
177 program into employment as described in s. 445.032 who is
178 younger than 13 years of age.

179 ~~7.6.~~ A child who has special needs, has been determined
180 eligible as a student with a disability, has a current
181 individual education plan with a Florida school district, and is
182 not younger than 3 years of age. A special needs child eligible
183 under this paragraph remains eligible until the child is
184 eligible for admission to kindergarten in a public school under
185 s. 1003.21(1)(a)2.

186 ~~8.7.~~ A child who otherwise meets one of the eligibility
187 criteria in paragraphs (a) and (b) and subparagraphs 1. and 2.
188 but who is also enrolled concurrently in the federal Head Start
189 Program and the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program.

190 Section 6. Paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of section
191 1002.89, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

192 1002.89 School readiness program; funding.—

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

197 (a) *School readiness program allocation.*—If the annual
198 allocation for the school readiness program is not determined in
199 the General Appropriations Act or the substantive bill
200 implementing the General Appropriations Act, it must ~~shall~~ be
201 determined as follows:

202 1. For each county in the early learning coalition, the
203 total number of unweighted full-time equivalent school readiness

38-01129B-25

20251382__

204 children, as adopted by the Early Learning Programs Estimating
205 Conference pursuant to s. 216.136(8), which must consider the
206 historical trend of children served and population changes for
207 each county, shall be multiplied by the appropriate care level
208 factor to calculate the weighted full-time equivalent school
209 readiness children. For purposes of this subparagraph, the term
210 "care level factor" means the adjustment made based on the
211 relative differences in reimbursement rates associated with the
212 eligible school readiness children pursuant to s. 1002.87.

213 2. The total weighted full-time equivalent school readiness
214 children shall be multiplied by the rate index to calculate the
215 adjusted weighted full-time equivalent school readiness
216 children. For purposes of this subparagraph, the term "rate
217 index" means the adjustment made based on the impact of
218 geographic location on reimbursement rates.

219 3. The school readiness program funds shall be distributed
220 based on each county's proportionate share of the total adjusted
221 weighted full-time equivalent school readiness children.

222 Section 7. This act shall take effect July 1, 2025.