

By the Appropriations Committee on Pre-K - 12 Education; and
Senator Calatayud

602-03446-25

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A bill to be entitled

An act relating to access to school readiness programs for economically disadvantaged households; amending s. 1002.81, F.S.; revising the definitions of the terms "economically disadvantaged" and "single point of entry"; amending s. 1002.82, F.S.; revising the Department of Education's duties for adopting specific program support services to coordinate a comprehensive early learning program; amending s. 1002.84, F.S.; revising duties of early learning coalitions relating to the creation of a uniform waiting list; amending s. 1002.85, F.S.; revising requirements for the school readiness program plan; revising data elements relating to early learning programs collected by the Department of Education; amending s. 1002.87, F.S.; revising which groups of students receive priority in a school readiness program; amending s. 1002.89, F.S.; revising criteria for the determination of the annual allocation for the school readiness program; providing an effective date.

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

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

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

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

602-03446-25

20251382c1

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

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

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

1002.82 Department of Education; powers and duties.—

(2) The department shall:

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

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

a. Statewide data information program requirements that include:

(I) Eligibility requirements.

(II) Financial reports.

602-03446-25

20251382c1

(III) Program accountability measures.

(IV) Child progress reports.

b. Child care resource and referral services.

c. A single point of entry and uniform waiting list that tracks children waiting for school readiness program services based on family household income and by priority established pursuant to s. 1002.87.

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

a. Warm-Line services.

b. Anti-fraud plans.

c. Training and support for parental involvement in children's early education.

d. Family literacy activities and services.

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

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

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

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

1002.85 Early learning coalition plans.—

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

602-03446-25

20251382c1

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

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

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

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

602-03446-25

20251382c1

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

Section 5. Paragraph (c) of subsection (1) of section 1002.87, Florida Statutes, is 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, with a household income at or less than 55 percent of the state median income, and may include such child's eligible siblings, beginning with the school year in which the sibling is eligible for admission

602-03446-25

20251382c1

146 to kindergarten in a public school under s. 1003.21(1)(a)2.
147 until 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

602-03446-25

20251382c1

working family that is economically disadvantaged.

~~6.5.~~ 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.

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

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

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

1002.89 School readiness program; funding.—

(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.

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

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

602-03446-25

20251382c1

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.