

1 A bill to be entitled

2 An act relating to early education workforce support;
3 providing legislative findings and intent; providing a
4 short title; creating s. 1002.996, F.S.; establishing
5 the Early Education Workforce Support Pilot Program
6 within the Department of Education for a specified
7 period; providing the purpose of and funding for the
8 program; providing definitions; providing program
9 services; providing early education worker eligibility
10 requirements; providing department and participating
11 provider responsibilities; providing reporting and
12 recommendation requirements; providing for the future
13 expiration of the program; providing for rulemaking;
14 providing an effective date.

15
16 WHEREAS, the Legislature finds that this state faces a
17 critical shortage of early education workers due to low wages
18 and high job demands, leading to instability in the child care
19 sector, and

20 WHEREAS, the Legislature finds that providing access to
21 free early education services for the children of early
22 education workers can reduce the financial strain on and improve
23 the job satisfaction of early education workers, and increase
24 workforce retention for early education providers, and

25 WHEREAS, the Legislature further finds that supporting the

26 | early education workforce is essential for expanding access to
 27 | high-quality early learning programs for all families in this
 28 | state, and

29 | WHEREAS, it is the intent of the Legislature to establish a
 30 | program that provides free early education services to the
 31 | children of eligible early education workers and strengthen this
 32 | state's early education workforce by reducing barriers to
 33 | employment and retention of early education workers, NOW,
 34 | THEREFORE,

35 |
 36 | Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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 38 | **Section 1.** This act may be cited as the "Early Education
 39 | Workforce Support and Access Act."

40 | **Section 2. Section 1002.996, Florida Statutes, is created**
 41 | **to read:**

42 | 1002.996 The Early Education Workforce Support Pilot
 43 | Program.—There is established the Early Education Workforce
 44 | Support Pilot Program for a period of 2 years to be administered
 45 | by the Department of Education to provide free early education
 46 | services to eligible children of early education workers.
 47 | Funding for the program shall be as provided in the General
 48 | Appropriations Act. The department may also use any eligible
 49 | federal funds, including, but not limited to, the Child Care and
 50 | Development Block Grant.

51 (1) DEFINITIONS.—For purposes of this section, the term:

52 (a) "Early education worker" means a person who is a paid
53 child care personnel as defined in s. 402.302 who works at least
54 20 hours per week.

55 (b) "Eligible child" means the biological, adopted, or
56 legal child of an early education worker who is not yet eligible
57 for kindergarten and who resides with the early education
58 worker.

59 (c) "Participating provider" means a child care facility
60 licensed under s. 402.305, family day care home licensed under
61 s. 402.313, large family child care home licensed under s.
62 402.3131, or faith-based child care provider exempt from
63 licensure under s. 402.316 that is approved by the department to
64 offer free early education services through the program.

65 (d) "Program" means the Early Education Workforce Support
66 Pilot Program.

67 (2) PROGRAM SERVICES.—The program shall provide funds
68 directly to participating providers for the full cost of tuition
69 of an eligible child selected to participate in the program,
70 including either full-time or part-time care based on the needs
71 of the family.

72 (3) EARLY EDUCATION WORKER ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS.—To be
73 eligible for participation in the program, an early education
74 worker must:

75 (a) Be a resident of this state who resides in a

76 participating county and has an eligible child who resides with
77 him or her.

78 (b) Be employed for at least 6 months by a child care
79 facility licensed under s. 402.305 for a minimum of 20 hours per
80 week.

81 (c) Provide proof of employment and residency in this
82 state.

83 (4) DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBILITIES.—The department shall:

84 (a) Select at least two counties to participate in the
85 program. Such counties must have the highest need for early
86 education workers based on workforce shortages and access to
87 child care services.

88 (b) Establish a process to verify the program eligibility
89 of participating providers, early education workers, and
90 eligible children.

91 (c) Establish participation requirements for participating
92 providers and early education workers.

93 (d) Establish a grant mechanism and procedures to
94 reimburse participating providers participating in the program.

95 (e) Monitor the implementation of the program to ensure
96 equitable access.

97 (f) Evaluate the program's effectiveness in improving
98 workforce retention for early education providers and access to
99 child care for the children of early education workers.

100 (5) PARTICIPATING PROVIDERS RESPONSIBILITIES.—

101 Participating providers must:

102 (a) Maintain compliance with all state and federal
103 licensing and regulatory requirements.

104 (b) Submit the information and data required by the
105 department, including an annual report detailing the enrollment
106 of eligible children and the attendance and outcome of such
107 children.

108 (c) Meet any other requirements established by the
109 department.

110 (6) PROGRAM REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS.—Within 90 days
111 after completion of the program, the department shall provide to
112 the Legislature:

113 (a) A recommendation for the statewide expansion of the
114 program.

115 (b) A report on all of the following:

116 1. Program enrollment.

117 2. Workforce retention rates.

118 3. Financial impacts of the program.

119 (7) EXPIRATION.—This section expires on June 30, 2028.

120 (8) RULEMAKING.—The State Board of Education may adopt
121 rules to administer this section, including rules to establish
122 eligibility verification requirements, provider participation
123 requirements, and reimbursement procedures.

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