

1 A bill to be entitled
 2 An act relating to the school readiness program;
 3 amending s. 1002.81, F.S.; revising the definition of
 4 the terms "economically disadvantaged" and "single
 5 point of entry"; amending s. 1002.82, F.S.; revising
 6 requirements for a specified statewide data
 7 information program within the school readiness
 8 program; amending s. 1002.84, F.S.; revising
 9 requirements for the program's uniform waiting list;
 10 amending s. 1002.85, F.S.; conforming provisions to
 11 changes made by the act; amending s. 1002.87, F.S.;
 12 revising the criteria for children to be given
 13 priority for participation in the in the program;
 14 requiring early learning coalitions to enroll children
 15 from the waiting list for the program; amending s.
 16 1002.89, F.S.; revising the requirements for
 17 determining the school readiness program allocation;
 18 providing an effective date.

19
 20 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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

24 1002.81 Definitions.—Consistent with the requirements of
 25 45 C.F.R. parts 98 and 99 and as used in this part, the term:

26 (6) "Economically disadvantaged" means having a family
 27 income that does not exceed 65 percent of the state median
 28 income ~~150 percent of the federal poverty level~~ and includes
 29 being a child of a working migratory family as defined by 34
 30 C.F.R. s. 200.81(d) or (f) or an agricultural worker who is
 31 employed by more than one agricultural employer during the
 32 course of a year, and whose income varies according to weather
 33 conditions and market stability.

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

44 **Section 2. Paragraph (f) of subsection (2) of section**
 45 **1002.82, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:**

46 1002.82 Department of Education; powers and duties.—

47 (2) The department shall:

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

51 1. Shall adopt specific program support services that
 52 address the state's school readiness program, including:
 53 a. Statewide data information program requirements that
 54 include:
 55 (I) Eligibility requirements.
 56 (II) Financial reports.
 57 (III) Program accountability measures.
 58 (IV) Child progress reports.
 59 b. Child care resource and referral services.
 60 c. A single point of entry and uniform waiting list that
 61 tracks children waiting for school readiness program services
 62 based on family household income and the priorities established
 63 under s. 1002.87.
 64 2. May provide technical assistance and guidance on
 65 additional support services to complement the school readiness
 66 program, including:
 67 a. Warm-Line services.
 68 b. Anti-fraud plans.
 69 c. Training and support for parental involvement in
 70 children's early education.
 71 d. Family literacy activities and services.
 72 **Section 3. Subsection (2) of section 1002.84, Florida**
 73 **Statutes, is amended to read:**
 74 1002.84 Early learning coalitions; school readiness powers
 75 and duties.—Each early learning coalition shall:

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

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

83 1002.85 Early learning coalition plans.—

84 (2) Each early learning coalition must submit a school
85 readiness program plan every 3 years to the department before
86 the expenditure of funds. A coalition may not implement its
87 school readiness program plan until it receives approval from
88 the department. A coalition may not implement any revision to
89 its school readiness program plan until the coalition submits
90 the revised plan to and receives approval from the department.
91 If the department rejects a plan or revision, the coalition must
92 continue to operate under its previously approved plan. The plan
93 must include, but is not limited to:

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

96 1. Single point of entry.

97 2. Uniform waiting list that tracks children waiting for
98 school readiness program services based on family household
99 income and the priorities established under s. 1002.87.

100 3. Eligibility and enrollment processes and local

101 eligibility priorities for children pursuant to s. 1002.87.

102 4. Parent access and choice.

103 5. Sliding fee scale and policies on applying the waiver
104 or reduction of fees in accordance with s. 1002.84(9).

105 6. Use of preassessments and postassessments, as
106 applicable.

107 7. Use of contracted slots, as applicable, based on the
108 results of the assessment required under paragraph (i).

109 (5) The department shall collect and report data on
110 coalition delivery of early learning programs. Elements shall
111 include, but are not limited to, measures related to progress
112 towards reducing the number of children on the waiting list, the
113 percentage of children served by the program as compared to the
114 number of administrative staff and overhead, the percentage of
115 children served compared to total number of children under the
116 age of 5 years below 65 percent of the state median income ~~150~~
117 ~~percent of the federal poverty level~~, provider payment
118 processes, fraud intervention, child attendance and stability,
119 use of child care resource and referral, and kindergarten
120 readiness outcomes for children in the Voluntary Prekindergarten
121 Education Program or the school readiness program upon entry
122 into kindergarten. The department shall request input from the
123 coalitions and school readiness program providers before
124 finalizing the format and data to be used. The report shall be
125 implemented beginning July 1, 2014, and results of the report

126 must be included in the annual report under s. 1002.82.

127 **Section 5. Paragraph (c) of subsection (1) and subsection**
128 **(3) of section 1002.87, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:**

129 1002.87 School readiness program; eligibility and
130 enrollment.—

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

133 (c) Subsequent priority shall be given, based on the early
134 learning coalition's local priorities identified under s.

135 1002.85(2)(i), to children who meet the following criteria:

136 1. A child from birth to the beginning of the school year
137 for which the child is eligible for admission to kindergarten in
138 a public school under s. 1003.21(1)(a)2. who is from a working
139 family that is economically disadvantaged, with a household
140 income that is less than 50 percent of the state median income,
141 and may include such child's eligible siblings, beginning with
142 the school year in which the sibling is eligible for admission
143 to kindergarten in a public school under s. 1003.21(1)(a)2.
144 until the beginning of the school year in which the sibling is
145 eligible to begin 6th grade, provided that the first priority
146 for funding an eligible sibling is local revenues available to
147 the coalition for funding direct services.

148 2. A child from birth to the beginning of the school year
149 for which the child is eligible for admission to kindergarten in
150 a public school under s. 1003.21(1)(a)2. who is from a working

151 family that is economically disadvantaged, with a household
152 income that is greater than 50 percent, but less than 65
153 percent, of the state median income, and may include such
154 child's eligible siblings, beginning with the school year in
155 which the sibling is eligible for admission to kindergarten in a
156 public school under s. 1003.21(1)(a)2. until the beginning of
157 the school year in which the sibling is eligible to begin 6th
158 grade, provided that the first priority for funding an eligible
159 sibling is local revenues available to the coalition for funding
160 direct services.

161 ~~3.2.~~ A child of a parent who transitions from the work
162 program into employment as described in s. 445.032 from birth to
163 the beginning of the school year for which the child is eligible
164 for admission to kindergarten in a public school under s.
165 1003.21(1)(a)2.

166 ~~4.3.~~ An at-risk child who is at least 9 years of age but
167 younger than 13 years of age. An at-risk child whose sibling is
168 enrolled in the school readiness program within an eligibility
169 priority category listed in paragraphs (a) and (b) and
170 subparagraph 1. shall be given priority over other children who
171 are eligible under this paragraph.

172 ~~5.4.~~ A child who is younger than 13 years of age from a
173 working family that is economically disadvantaged.

174 ~~6.5.~~ A child of a parent who transitions from the work
175 program into employment as described in s. 445.032 who is

176 | younger than 13 years of age.

177 | 7.6. A child who has special needs, has been determined
 178 | eligible as a student with a disability, has a current
 179 | individual education plan with a Florida school district, and is
 180 | not younger than 3 years of age. A special needs child eligible
 181 | under this paragraph remains eligible until the child is
 182 | eligible for admission to kindergarten in a public school under
 183 | s. 1003.21(1)(a)2.

184 | 8.7. A child who otherwise meets one of the eligibility
 185 | criteria in paragraphs (a) and (b) and subparagraphs 1. and 2.
 186 | but who is also enrolled concurrently in the federal Head Start
 187 | Program and the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program.

188 | (3) Contingent upon the availability of funds, a coalition
 189 | shall enroll eligible children, ~~including those~~ from its waiting
 190 | list, according to the eligibility priorities and criteria
 191 | established in subsection (1).

192 | **Section 6. Paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of section**
 193 | **1002.89, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:**

194 | 1002.89 School readiness program; funding.—

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

199 | (a) School readiness program allocation.—If the annual
 200 | allocation for the school readiness program is not determined in

201 the General Appropriations Act or the substantive bill
202 implementing the General Appropriations Act, it shall be
203 determined as follows:

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

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

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

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