

CS/HB 877

2025

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to the school readiness program;
3 amending s. 1002.87, F.S.; revising the criteria for a
4 child to receive priority for participation in the
5 school readiness program; amending s. 1002.89, F.S.;
6 providing requirements for a school readiness program
7 provider to be eligible for specified funding
8 beginning on a specified date; providing an effective
9 date.

10
11 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

12
13 **Section 1. Paragraph (c) of subsection (1) and subsection**
14 **(2) of section 1002.87, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:**

15 1002.87 School readiness program; eligibility and
16 enrollment.—

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

19 (c) Subsequent priority shall be given, based on the early
20 learning coalition's local priorities identified under s.
21 1002.85(2)(i), to children who meet the following criteria:

22 1. A child from birth to the beginning of the school year
23 for which the child is eligible for admission to kindergarten in
24 a public school under s. 1003.21(1)(a)2. who is from a working
25 family that is economically disadvantaged, and may include such

26 child's eligible siblings, beginning with the school year in
27 which the sibling is eligible for admission to kindergarten in a
28 public school under s. 1003.21(1)(a)2. until the beginning of
29 the school year in which the sibling is eligible to begin 6th
30 grade, provided that the first priority for funding an eligible
31 sibling is local revenues available to the coalition for funding
32 direct services.

33 2. A child of a parent who transitions from the work
34 program into employment as described in s. 445.032 from birth to
35 the beginning of the school year for which the child is eligible
36 for admission to kindergarten in a public school under s.
37 1003.21(1)(a)2.

38 3. An at-risk child who is at least 9 years of age but
39 younger than 13 years of age. An at-risk child whose sibling is
40 enrolled in the school readiness program within an eligibility
41 priority category listed in paragraphs (a) and (b) and
42 subparagraph 1. shall be given priority over other children who
43 are eligible under this paragraph.

44 4. A child who is younger than 13 years of age from a
45 working family that is economically disadvantaged.

46 5. A child of a parent who transitions from the work
47 program into employment as described in s. 445.032 who is
48 younger than 13 years of age.

49 6. A child who has special needs and~~r~~ has been determined
50 eligible as a student who requires additional accommodations

51 beyond those required by the Americans with Disabilities Act.
52 The child's special needs and associated accommodations must be
53 validated by a licensed health care professional, a licensed
54 mental health professional, or an educational psychologist. Such
55 person may not be the child's parent or relative or a person
56 employed by a child care provider. The following documentation
57 must be used to determine the child's eligibility for such
58 accommodations:

59 a. ~~with a disability, has~~ A current individual education
60 plan with a Florida school district;~~, and is not younger than 3~~
61 ~~years of age.~~

62 b. A current individualized family support plan;

63 c. A diagnosed special need; or

64 d. A written determination of required accommodations by a
65 licensed health care professional, a licensed mental health
66 professional, or an educational psychologist ~~needs child~~
67 ~~eligible under this paragraph remains eligible until the child~~
68 ~~is eligible for admission to kindergarten in a public school~~
69 ~~under s. 1003.21(1)(a)2.~~

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

74 (2) A school readiness program provider may be paid only
75 for authorized hours of care provided for a child in the school

76 readiness program. A child enrolled in the Voluntary
77 Prekindergarten Education Program may receive care from the
78 school readiness program if the child is eligible according to
79 the eligibility priorities and criteria established in
80 subsection (1). The school readiness program provider of a child
81 who meets the requirements of subsection (6) may be eligible for
82 additional funding through the special needs differential
83 allocation to implement the special needs rate as determined in
84 s. 1002.89(1)(d).

85 **Section 2. Paragraph (d) of subsection (1) of section**
86 **1002.89, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:**

87 1002.89 School readiness program; funding.—

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

92 (d) Special needs differential allocation.—There is
93 created the special needs differential allocation to assist
94 eligible school readiness program providers to implement the
95 special needs rate provisions defined in the state's approved
96 Child Care and Development Fund Plan. Subject to legislative
97 appropriation, each early learning coalition shall be reimbursed
98 based on actual expenditures. All expenditures from the special
99 needs differential allocation shall be used by the department to
100 help meet federal targeted requirements for improving quality to

101 the extent allowable in the state's approved plan. A school
102 readiness program provider is eligible for funding through the
103 allocation to implement the special needs differential rate upon
104 meeting all of the following requirements beginning July 1,
105 2027:

106 1. The provider has met or exceeded the minimum program
107 assessment composite score required for contracting as
108 determined by the department, as applicable.

109 2. Instructional staff employed or contracted by the
110 provider has completed training on early identification of
111 social and communication delays as specified by the department.

112 3. The instructor assigned by the provider to the child in
113 need of additional accommodations under s. 1002.87(1)(c)6. has
114 completed 10 hours of training in inclusive early childhood or
115 inclusive school-age education practices within the first 90
116 days after the child's enrollment or within 90 days after hiring
117 of a new instructor assigned by the provider to a child in need
118 of additional accommodations under s. 1002.87(1)(c)6.

119
120 After the initial determination of eligibility, the provider
121 must maintain the required program composite score and the
122 instructor assigned by the provider to a child in need of
123 additional accommodations under s. 1002.87(1)(c)6. must complete
124 a minimum of 2 hours of relevant training in each subsequent
125 year after the initial determination of eligibility in order to

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126 | remain eligible to implement the special needs differential
127 | rate.

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