

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 term "economically disadvantaged"; amending s.  
5           1002.84, F.S.; revising requirements for the sliding  
6           fee scale for families receiving school readiness  
7           program services to include a new method to calculate  
8           parent copayments at the time of eligibility  
9           determination and annually thereafter, regardless of  
10          the number of children; requiring certain information  
11          collected by the Department of Education to be used  
12          for a specified purposes until certain information is  
13          published; amending s. 1002.85, F.S.; revising  
14          requirements for the data elements that must be  
15          collected and reported by the department; revising the  
16          date by which the report must be implemented; amending  
17          s. 1002.89, F.S.; revising a specified calculation for  
18          the school readiness program allocation; amending s.  
19          1002.90, F.S.; requiring official cost-of-care  
20          information to be published by the Early Learning  
21          Programs Estimating Conference by a specified date;  
22          requiring certain data to be used when establishing  
23          cost-of-care information for the school readiness  
24          program; providing appropriations; providing effective  
25          dates.

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

Section 1. Subsection (6) of section 1002.81, Florida Statutes, is 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 55 percent of the state median 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.

Section 2. Subsection (9) and paragraph (a) of subsection (17) of section 1002.84, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

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

(9) Implement ~~Establish~~ a parent sliding fee scale that provides for the calculation of a parent copayment at the time of the eligibility determination and for an annual eligibility redetermination thereafter, which increases in percentage with a parent's income, regardless of the number of children, as follows:

51 (a) A parent whose income is at or below 60 percent of the  
52 state median income is responsible for a copayment of 3 percent  
53 of his or her income.

54 (b) A parent whose income is above 60 percent but at or  
55 below 65 percent of the state median income is responsible for a  
56 copayment of 4 percent of his or her income.

57 (c) A parent whose income is above 65 percent but at or  
58 below 75 percent of the state median income is responsible for a  
59 copayment of 5 percent of his or her income.

60 (d) A parent whose income is above 75 percent but at or  
61 below 80 percent of the state median income is responsible for a  
62 copayment of 6 percent of his or her income.

63 (e) A parent whose income is above 80 percent but at or  
64 below 85 percent of the state median income is responsible for a  
65 copayment of 7 percent of his or her income.

66  
67 The parent copayment for a child who receives part-time care is  
68 50 percent of the copayment amount calculated in paragraphs (a) -  
69 (e) that is not a barrier to families receiving school readiness  
70 program services. A coalition may waive the copayment for an at-  
71 risk child or temporarily waive the copayment for a child whose  
72 family's income is at or below the federal poverty level or  
73 whose family experiences a natural disaster or an event that  
74 limits the parent's ability to pay, such as incarceration,  
75 placement in residential treatment, or becoming homeless, or an

76 emergency situation such as a household fire or burglary, or  
77 while the parent is participating in parenting classes or  
78 participating in an Early Head Start program or Head Start  
79 Program. A parent may not transfer school readiness program  
80 services to another school readiness program provider until the  
81 parent has submitted documentation from the current school  
82 readiness program provider to the early learning coalition  
83 stating that the parent has satisfactorily fulfilled the  
84 copayment obligation.

85 (17) (a) Distribute the school readiness program funds as  
86 allocated in the General Appropriations Act to the eligible  
87 providers using the following methodology:

88 1. For each county in the early learning coalition,  
89 multiply the cost of care by care level as provided in s.  
90 1002.90 by the county's comparable wage factor provided in s.  
91 1011.62(2). Cost-of-care information collected by the Department  
92 of Education shall be used to implement the requirements of this  
93 subsection until the official cost-of-care information is  
94 published pursuant to s. 1002.90.

95 2. If a county enacted a local ordinance before January 1,  
96 2022, that establishes the county's staff-to-children ratio for  
97 licensed child care facilities below the ratio established in s.  
98 402.305(4), multiply the provider reimbursement rates for that  
99 county by the adjustment factor specified in the General  
100 Appropriations Act.

101           3. Apply the weight established pursuant to s. 1002.90 for  
 102 each provider type to calculate the minimum provider  
 103 reimbursement rates by care level.

104           4. Multiply the weighted provider reimbursement rates by  
 105 22 percent to determine the amount of the school readiness  
 106 allocation an early learning coalition is eligible to retain  
 107 pursuant to s. 1002.89(4).

108  
 109 Each early learning coalition with approved minimum provider  
 110 reimbursement rates for the infant to age 5 care levels that are  
 111 higher than the minimum provider reimbursement rates established  
 112 in this subsection may continue to implement its approved  
 113 minimum provider reimbursement rates until the rates established  
 114 in this subsection exceed its approved rates.

115           Section 3. Subsection (5) of section 1002.85, Florida  
 116 Statutes, is amended to read:

117           1002.85 Early learning coalition plans.—

118           (5) The department shall collect and report data on  
 119 coalition delivery of early learning programs. Data elements  
 120 must ~~shall~~ include, but are not limited to, measures related to  
 121 progress toward ~~towards~~ reducing the number of children on the  
 122 waiting list, the percentage of children served by the program  
 123 as compared to the number of administrative staff and overhead,  
 124 the percentage of children served compared to the total number  
 125 of children younger than ~~under~~ the age of 5 years whose family

126 | income is below 55 percent of the state median income ~~150~~  
 127 | ~~percent of the federal poverty level,~~ provider payment  
 128 | processes, fraud intervention, child attendance and stability,  
 129 | use of child care resource and referral, and kindergarten  
 130 | readiness outcomes for children in the Voluntary Prekindergarten  
 131 | Education Program or the school readiness program upon entry  
 132 | into kindergarten. The department shall request input from the  
 133 | coalitions and school readiness program providers before  
 134 | finalizing the format and data to be used. The report must ~~shall~~  
 135 | be implemented beginning July 1, 2025 ~~2014~~, and results of the  
 136 | report must be included in the annual report under s. 1002.82.

137 | Section 4. Paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of section  
 138 | 1002.89, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

139 | 1002.89 School readiness program; funding.—

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

144 | (a) School readiness program allocation.—If the annual  
 145 | allocation for the school readiness program is not determined in  
 146 | the General Appropriations Act or the substantive bill  
 147 | implementing the General Appropriations Act, it must ~~shall~~ be  
 148 | determined based on a calculation that considers, at a minimum,  
 149 | full-time equivalent program enrollment estimates per care  
 150 | level, approved cost of care developed in accordance with s.

151 1002.90, and the total school readiness eligible population as  
 152 adopted by the Early Learning Programs Estimating Conference  
 153 pursuant to s. 216.136(8). as follows:

154 ~~1. For each county in the early learning coalition, the~~  
 155 ~~total school readiness eligible population, as adopted by the~~  
 156 ~~Early Learning Programs Estimating Conference pursuant to s.~~  
 157 ~~216.136(8), shall be multiplied by the county's comparable wage~~  
 158 ~~factor provided in s. 1011.62(2).~~

159 ~~2. If a county passed a local ordinance before January 1,~~  
 160 ~~2022, that establishes the county's staff-to-children ratio for~~  
 161 ~~licensed child care facilities below the ratio established in s.~~  
 162 ~~402.305(4), multiply the product calculated in subparagraph 1.~~  
 163 ~~by the adjustment factor specified in the General Appropriations~~  
 164 ~~Act.~~

165 ~~3. Each county's school readiness allocation shall be~~  
 166 ~~based on the county's proportionate share of the total adjusted~~  
 167 ~~eligible school readiness population.~~

168 Section 5. Effective upon this act becoming a law, section  
 169 1002.90, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

170 1002.90 School readiness cost-of-care information.—

171 (1) Annually, The principals of the Early Learning  
 172 Programs Estimating Conference established in s. 216.136(8)  
 173 shall publish by June 1, 2024, ~~develop~~ official cost-of-care  
 174 information based on actual school readiness direct services  
 175 program expenditures and information provided to the Department

176 of Education pursuant to s. 1002.895(6) ~~s. 1002.895~~. Conference  
177 principals shall agree on the cost of child care by care level  
178 and provider type, the provider type weights, and the methods of  
179 computation. The department shall provide the conference  
180 principals with all requested and necessary data to develop such  
181 information. The data may include a matrix by early learning  
182 coalition of any full-time equivalent changes made by the  
183 Division of Early Learning as part of its administration of the  
184 school readiness program.

185 (2) Beginning in the 2024-2025 fiscal year and annually  
186 thereafter, the Early Learning Programs Estimating Conference  
187 shall update the official cost-of-care information based on any  
188 updates to the actual school readiness direct services program  
189 expenditures and information provided to the Department of  
190 Education pursuant to s. 1002.895(6). The conference shall  
191 provide the official cost-of-care information to the Legislature  
192 at least 90 days before the scheduled annual legislative  
193 session.

194 Section 6. For the 2024-2025 fiscal year, the sum of  
195 \$75,384,882 in nonrecurring funds is appropriated from the Child  
196 Care and Development Block Grant Trust Fund to the Department of  
197 Education for the costs associated with the change of the income  
198 eligibility requirement for the school readiness program to 55  
199 percent of the state median income as provided by this act.  
200 These funds shall be placed in reserve. The department is



201 authorized to submit budget amendments requesting the release of  
202 the funds pursuant to chapter 216, Florida Statutes. Release of  
203 the funds is contingent upon the submission of an allocation  
204 plan in accordance with the requirements of s. 1002.89(1),  
205 Florida Statutes.

206       Section 7. For the 2024-2025 fiscal year, the sum of \$100  
207 million in nonrecurring funds is appropriated from the Child  
208 Care and Development Block Grant Trust Fund to the Department of  
209 Education for allocation to the early learning coalitions in  
210 accordance with s. 1002.84(17), Florida Statutes. These funds  
211 shall be placed in reserve. The department is authorized to  
212 submit budget amendments requesting the release of the funds  
213 pursuant to chapter 216, Florida Statutes. Release of the funds  
214 is contingent upon the submission of an allocation plan  
215 developed by the department in collaboration with the early  
216 learning coalitions.

217       Section 8. Except as otherwise expressly provided in this  
218 act and except for this section, which shall take effect upon  
219 this act becoming a law, this act shall take effect July 1,  
220 2024.