

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; deleting
19 provisions relating to certain expenditures from the
20 Gold Seal Quality Care Program allocation, the
21 differential payment program allocation, and the
22 special needs differential allocation; amending s.
23 1002.90, F.S.; requiring official cost-of-care
24 information to be published by the Early Learning
25 Programs Estimating Conference by a specified date;

26 requiring certain data to be used when establishing
 27 cost-of-care information for the school readiness
 28 program; providing appropriations; providing effective
 29 dates.

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

32
 33 Section 1. Subsection (6) of section 1002.81, Florida
 34 Statutes, is amended to read:

35 1002.81 Definitions.—Consistent with the requirements of
 36 45 C.F.R. parts 98 and 99 and as used in this part, the term:

37 (6) "Economically disadvantaged" means having a family
 38 income that does not exceed 55 percent of the state median
 39 income ~~150 percent of the federal poverty level~~ and includes
 40 being a child of a working migratory family as defined by 34
 41 C.F.R. s. 200.81(d) or (f) or an agricultural worker who is
 42 employed by more than one agricultural employer during the
 43 course of a year, and whose income varies according to weather
 44 conditions and market stability.

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

47 1002.84 Early learning coalitions; school readiness powers
 48 and duties.—Each early learning coalition shall:

49 (9) Implement ~~Establish~~ a parent sliding fee scale that
 50 provides for the calculation of a parent copayment at the time

51 of the eligibility determination and for an annual eligibility
52 redetermination thereafter, which increases in percentage with a
53 parent's income, regardless of the number of children, as
54 follows:

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

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

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

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

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

70
71 The parent copayment for a child who receives part-time care is
72 50 percent of the copayment amount calculated in paragraphs (a)-
73 (e) that is not a barrier to families receiving school readiness
74 program services. A coalition may waive the copayment for an at-
75 risk child or temporarily waive the copayment for a child whose

76 family's income is at or below the federal poverty level or
77 whose family experiences a natural disaster or an event that
78 limits the parent's ability to pay, such as incarceration,
79 placement in residential treatment, or becoming homeless, or an
80 emergency situation such as a household fire or burglary, or
81 while the parent is participating in parenting classes or
82 participating in an Early Head Start program or Head Start
83 Program. A parent may not transfer school readiness program
84 services to another school readiness program provider until the
85 parent has submitted documentation from the current school
86 readiness program provider to the early learning coalition
87 stating that the parent has satisfactorily fulfilled the
88 copayment obligation.

89 (17) (a) Distribute the school readiness program funds as
90 allocated in the General Appropriations Act to the eligible
91 providers using the following methodology:

92 1. For each county in the early learning coalition,
93 multiply the cost of care by care level as provided in s.
94 1002.90 by the county's comparable wage factor provided in s.
95 1011.62 (2). Cost-of-care information collected by the Department
96 of Education shall be used to implement the requirements of this
97 subsection until the official cost-of-care information is
98 published pursuant to s. 1002.90.

99 2. If a county enacted a local ordinance before January 1,
100 2022, that establishes the county's staff-to-children ratio for

101 licensed child care facilities below the ratio established in s.
 102 402.305(4), multiply the provider reimbursement rates for that
 103 county by the adjustment factor specified in the General
 104 Appropriations Act.

105 3. Apply the weight established pursuant to s. 1002.90 for
 106 each provider type to calculate the minimum provider
 107 reimbursement rates by care level.

108 4. Multiply the weighted provider reimbursement rates by
 109 22 percent to determine the amount of the school readiness
 110 allocation an early learning coalition is eligible to retain
 111 pursuant to s. 1002.89(4).
 112

113 Each early learning coalition with approved minimum provider
 114 reimbursement rates for the infant to age 5 care levels that are
 115 higher than the minimum provider reimbursement rates established
 116 in this subsection may continue to implement its approved
 117 minimum provider reimbursement rates until the rates established
 118 in this subsection exceed its approved rates.

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

121 1002.85 Early learning coalition plans.—

122 (5) The department shall collect and report data on
 123 coalition delivery of early learning programs. Data elements
 124 must ~~shall~~ include, but are not limited to, measures related to
 125 progress toward ~~towards~~ reducing the number of children on the

126 waiting list, the percentage of children served by the program
 127 as compared to the number of administrative staff and overhead,
 128 the percentage of children served compared to the total number
 129 of children younger than ~~under~~ the age of 5 years whose family
 130 income is below 55 percent of the state median income ~~150~~
 131 ~~percent of the federal poverty level~~, provider payment
 132 processes, fraud intervention, child attendance and stability,
 133 use of child care resource and referral, and kindergarten
 134 readiness outcomes for children in the Voluntary Prekindergarten
 135 Education Program or the school readiness program upon entry
 136 into kindergarten. The department shall request input from the
 137 coalitions and school readiness program providers before
 138 finalizing the format and data to be used. The report must ~~shall~~
 139 be implemented beginning July 1, 2025 ~~2014~~, and results of the
 140 report must be included in the annual report under s. 1002.82.

141 Section 4. Subsection (1) of section 1002.89, Florida
 142 Statutes, is amended to read:

143 1002.89 School readiness program; funding.—

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

148 (a) School readiness program allocation.—If the annual
 149 allocation for the school readiness program is not determined in
 150 the General Appropriations Act or the substantive bill

151 implementing the General Appropriations Act, it must ~~shall~~ be
 152 determined based on a calculation that considers, at a minimum,
 153 full-time equivalent program enrollment estimates per care
 154 level, approved cost of care developed in accordance with s.
 155 1002.90, and the total school readiness eligible population as
 156 adopted by the Early Learning Programs Estimating Conference
 157 pursuant to s. 216.136(8). ~~as follows:~~

158 ~~1. For each county in the early learning coalition, the~~
 159 ~~total school readiness eligible population, as adopted by the~~
 160 ~~Early Learning Programs Estimating Conference pursuant to s.~~
 161 ~~216.136(8), shall be multiplied by the county's comparable wage~~
 162 ~~factor provided in s. 1011.62(2).~~

163 ~~2. If a county passed a local ordinance before January 1,~~
 164 ~~2022, that establishes the county's staff-to-children ratio for~~
 165 ~~licensed child care facilities below the ratio established in s.~~
 166 ~~402.305(4), multiply the product calculated in subparagraph 1.~~
 167 ~~by the adjustment factor specified in the General Appropriations~~
 168 ~~Act.~~

169 ~~3. Each county's school readiness allocation shall be~~
 170 ~~based on the county's proportionate share of the total adjusted~~
 171 ~~eligible school readiness population.~~

172 (b) Gold Seal Quality Care Program allocation.—There is
 173 created the Gold Seal Quality Care Program allocation to provide
 174 eligible school readiness program providers the rate
 175 differential established pursuant to s. 1002.945(6). ~~Subject to~~

176 ~~legislative appropriation, all expenditures from the Gold Seal~~
177 ~~Quality Care Program allocation shall be used by the department~~
178 ~~to help meet federal targeted requirements for improving quality~~
179 ~~to the extent allowable in the state's approved Child Care and~~
180 ~~Development Fund Plan.~~

181 (c) Differential payment program allocation.—There is
182 created the differential payment program allocation to provide
183 eligible school readiness program providers the differential pay
184 established pursuant to s. 1002.82(2)(o). ~~Subject to legislative~~
185 ~~appropriation, all expenditures from the differential payment~~
186 ~~program allocation shall be used by the department to help meet~~
187 ~~federal targeted requirements for improving quality to the~~
188 ~~extent allowable in the state's approved Child Care and~~
189 ~~Development Fund Plan.~~

190 (d) Special needs differential allocation.—There is
191 created the special needs differential allocation to assist
192 eligible school readiness program providers to implement the
193 special needs rate provisions defined in the state's approved
194 Child Care and Development Fund Plan. ~~Subject to legislative~~
195 ~~appropriation, each early learning coalition shall be reimbursed~~
196 ~~based on actual expenditures. All expenditures from the special~~
197 ~~needs differential allocation shall be used by the department to~~
198 ~~help meet federal targeted requirements for improving quality to~~
199 ~~the extent allowable in the state's approved plan.~~

200 Section 5. Effective upon this act becoming a law, section

201 1002.90, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:
 202 1002.90 School readiness cost-of-care information.—
 203 (1) ~~Annually,~~ The principals of the Early Learning
 204 Programs Estimating Conference established in s. 216.136(8)
 205 shall publish by June 1, 2024, ~~develop~~ official cost-of-care
 206 information based on actual school readiness direct services
 207 program expenditures and information provided to the Department
 208 of Education pursuant to s. 1002.895(6) ~~s. 1002.895~~. Conference
 209 principals shall agree on the cost of child care by care level
 210 and provider type, the provider type weights, and the methods of
 211 computation. The department shall provide the conference
 212 principals with all requested and necessary data to develop such
 213 information. The data may include a matrix by early learning
 214 coalition of any full-time equivalent changes made by the
 215 Division of Early Learning as part of its administration of the
 216 school readiness program.
 217 (2) Beginning in the 2024-2025 fiscal year and annually
 218 thereafter, the Early Learning Programs Estimating Conference
 219 shall update the official cost-of-care information based on any
 220 updates to the actual school readiness direct services program
 221 expenditures and information provided to the Department of
 222 Education pursuant to s. 1002.895(6). The conference shall
 223 provide the official cost-of-care information to the Legislature
 224 at least 90 days before the scheduled annual legislative
 225 session.

226 Section 6. For the 2024-2025 fiscal year, the sum of
 227 \$75,384,882 in nonrecurring funds is appropriated from the Child
 228 Care and Development Block Grant Trust Fund to the Department of
 229 Education for the costs associated with the change of the income
 230 eligibility requirement for the school readiness program to 55
 231 percent of the state median income as provided by this act.
 232 These funds shall be placed in reserve. The department is
 233 authorized to submit budget amendments requesting the release of
 234 the funds pursuant to chapter 216, Florida Statutes. Release of
 235 the funds is contingent upon the submission of an allocation
 236 plan in accordance with the requirements of s. 1002.89(1),
 237 Florida Statutes.

238 Section 7. For the 2024-2025 fiscal year, the sum of \$100
 239 million in nonrecurring funds is appropriated from the Child
 240 Care and Development Block Grant Trust Fund to the Department of
 241 Education for allocation to the early learning coalitions in
 242 accordance with s. 1002.84(17), Florida Statutes. These funds
 243 shall be placed in reserve. The department is authorized to
 244 submit budget amendments requesting the release of the funds
 245 pursuant to chapter 216, Florida Statutes. Release of the funds
 246 is contingent upon the submission of an allocation plan
 247 developed by the department in collaboration with the early
 248 learning coalitions.

249 Section 8. Except as otherwise expressly provided in this
 250 act and except for this section, which shall take effect upon

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251 | this act becoming a law, this act shall take effect July 1,
252 | 2024.