

Regular Session, 2014

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 61

BY REPRESENTATIVES LEGER AND PRICE

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in consultation with stakeholders, to develop a statewide model for the funding of and the equitable distribution of public funds for early childhood care and education and to submit a report with recommendations regarding the model to the legislature no later than sixty days prior to the convening of the 2015 Regular Session of the Legislature of Louisiana.

WHEREAS, the legislature passed Act No. 3 of the 2012 Regular Session of the Legislature, which directed the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to create a comprehensive and integrated network through which to manage and oversee all programs funded through state or federal resources that provide early childhood care or educational services; and

WHEREAS, through the enactment of Act No. 3 of the 2012 Regular Session of the Legislature, the legislature found and declared that:

(1) In order to significantly improve outcomes at all levels of the state's educational system, it is imperative that standards for, and expectations of, our early childhood programs be raised to levels that will promote kindergarten readiness and sustain lifelong learning and achievement.

(2) Publicly funded early childhood programs should prioritize kindergarten readiness and public monies should fund programs that excel at achieving high levels of kindergarten readiness, or progression towards kindergarten readiness, as applicable for the ages of children served.

(3) Parents who choose to send their children to publicly funded early childhood programs should have clear and actionable information on the quality of the programs available.

(4) Providers of publicly funded early childhood programs should be held accountable for the public monies they receive, but given the autonomy to implement an educational program that promotes and achieves kindergarten readiness without undue regulation.

(5) State entities involved in the oversight or provision of early childhood programs should collaborate, set standards of educational achievement for young children that align with standards established for children enrolled in grades kindergarten through twelve, and hold providers of publicly funded early childhood programs accountable without imposing undue regulation on said programs.

(6) There are high-quality early childhood programs in this state that can serve as a model for increasing standards of achievement and financial efficiency in publicly funded early childhood programs.

(7) Publicly funded early childhood programs receive a significant amount of public monies that can and should be maximized in pursuit of high-quality early childhood programs that achieve high levels of kindergarten readiness or progression towards kindergarten readiness, as applicable for the ages of children served.

(8) Tax incentives created for the purpose of promoting high-quality early childhood programs should be awarded based on kindergarten readiness, or progression towards kindergarten readiness, as applicable for the ages of children served.

(9) A fragmented system of standards, funding, and oversight of the state's publicly funded early childhood programs serves as a barrier to providing every child with the high-quality services and programs which he deserves and to providing parents with the information needed to make an informed choice when selecting the programs that best fit the needs of their children; and

WHEREAS, the legislature expressed its intent that "a comprehensive and integrated delivery system for early childhood care and education be created to ensure that every child enters kindergarten healthy and ready to learn"; and

WHEREAS, the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Department of Education, and the Department of Children and Family Services have worked diligently and collaboratively to implement the provisions of Act No. 3 of the 2012 Regular Session of the Legislature, including the integration of standards and expectations across

publicly funded early childhood care and education programs and the support of regional pilot programs; and

WHEREAS, the implementation of Act No. 3 of the 2012 Regular Session of the Legislature has appropriately focused on increasing the quality of care and education, preparing children to be kindergarten-ready, and honoring family choices; and

WHEREAS, it is imperative that all publicly funded early childhood care and education programs offer a consistent level of quality care and education to families, providing a safe, nurturing environment for children and preparing all students to successfully enter kindergarten; and

WHEREAS, the provision of quality care and education is determined, in large part, by the ability of early learning centers to employ capable individuals as caregivers and teachers; and

WHEREAS, publicly funded early childhood care and education programs in Louisiana are not currently funded equitably, contributing to the inability of some early learning centers and programs to meet the state's quality standards and expectations that lead to children being kindergarten-ready; and

WHEREAS, the families of approximately 65,000 Louisiana children have expressed their desire and need for quality early childhood care and education, as evidenced by program enrollments and waiting lists; and

WHEREAS, the state should make every reasonable attempt to equitably fund family choices to the fullest extent possible and to offer choices of consistent quality as families select publicly funded early childhood care and education.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to develop a statewide model for the funding of and the equitable distribution of public funds for quality early childhood care and education for Louisiana children, ages birth to five, whose families request such services, and to submit a report with recommendations regarding the model to the legislature no later than sixty days prior to the convening of the 2015 Regular Session of the Legislature of Louisiana.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in developing such a model, the board shall consult with the state's Early Childhood Advisory Council and the leadership of organizations representing child care, Head Start, and public and nonpublic schools.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the president of the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and the state superintendent of education.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE