

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. 1002.90, F.S.; requiring official cost-of-care
 18 information to be published by the Early Learning
 19 Programs Estimating Conference by a specified date;
 20 requiring certain data to be used when establishing
 21 cost-of-care information for the school readiness
 22 program; providing appropriations; providing effective
 23 dates.

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

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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:

(a) A parent whose income is at or below 60 percent of the state median income is responsible for a copayment of 3 percent

51 of his or her income.

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

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

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

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

64
 65 The parent copayment for a child who receives part-time care is
 66 50 percent of the copayment amount calculated in paragraphs (a) -
 67 (e) that is not a barrier to families receiving school readiness
 68 program services. A coalition may waive the copayment for an at-
 69 risk child or temporarily waive the copayment for a child whose
 70 family's income is at or below the federal poverty level or
 71 whose family experiences a natural disaster or an event that
 72 limits the parent's ability to pay, such as incarceration,
 73 placement in residential treatment, or becoming homeless, or an
 74 emergency situation such as a household fire or burglary, or
 75 while the parent is participating in parenting classes or

76 participating in an Early Head Start program or Head Start
 77 Program. A parent may not transfer school readiness program
 78 services to another school readiness program provider until the
 79 parent has submitted documentation from the current school
 80 readiness program provider to the early learning coalition
 81 stating that the parent has satisfactorily fulfilled the
 82 copayment obligation.

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

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

93 2. If a county enacted a local ordinance before January 1,
 94 2022, that establishes the county's staff-to-children ratio for
 95 licensed child care facilities below the ratio established in s.
 96 402.305(4), multiply the provider reimbursement rates for that
 97 county by the adjustment factor specified in the General
 98 Appropriations Act.

99 3. Apply the weight established pursuant to s. 1002.90 for
 100 each provider type to calculate the minimum provider

101 reimbursement rates by care level.

102 4. Multiply the weighted provider reimbursement rates by
 103 22 percent to determine the amount of the school readiness
 104 allocation an early learning coalition is eligible to retain
 105 pursuant to s. 1002.89(4).

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

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

115 1002.85 Early learning coalition plans.—

116 (5) The department shall collect and report data on
 117 coalition delivery of early learning programs. Data elements
 118 must ~~shall~~ include, but are not limited to, measures related to
 119 progress toward ~~towards~~ reducing the number of children on the
 120 waiting list, the percentage of children served by the program
 121 as compared to the number of administrative staff and overhead,
 122 the percentage of children served compared to the total number
 123 of children younger than ~~under~~ the age of 5 years whose family
 124 income is below 55 percent of the state median income ~~150~~
 125 ~~percent of the federal poverty level~~, provider payment

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

135 Section 4. Effective upon this act becoming a law, section
 136 1002.90, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

137 1002.90 School readiness cost-of-care information.—

138 (1) ~~Annually,~~ The principals of the Early Learning
 139 Programs Estimating Conference established in s. 216.136(8)
 140 shall publish by June 1, 2024, ~~develop~~ official cost-of-care
 141 information based on actual school readiness direct services
 142 program expenditures and information provided to the Department
 143 of Education pursuant to s. 1002.895(6) ~~s. 1002.895~~. Conference
 144 principals shall agree on the cost of child care by care level
 145 and provider type, the provider type weights, and the methods of
 146 computation. The department shall provide the conference
 147 principals with all requested and necessary data to develop such
 148 information. The data may include a matrix by early learning
 149 coalition of any full-time equivalent changes made by the
 150 Division of Early Learning as part of its administration of the

151 school readiness program.

152 (2) Beginning in the 2024-2025 fiscal year and annually
153 thereafter, the Early Learning Programs Estimating Conference
154 shall update the official cost-of-care information based on any
155 updates to the actual school readiness direct services program
156 expenditures and information provided to the Department of
157 Education pursuant to s. 1002.895(6). The conference shall
158 provide the official cost-of-care information to the Legislature
159 at least 90 days before the scheduled annual legislative
160 session.

161 Section 5. For the 2024-2025 fiscal year, the sum of
162 \$75,384,882 in nonrecurring funds is appropriated from the Child
163 Care and Development Block Grant Trust Fund to the Department of
164 Education for the costs associated with the change of the income
165 eligibility requirement for the school readiness program to 55
166 percent of the state median income as provided by this act.
167 These funds shall be placed in reserve. The department is
168 authorized to submit budget amendments requesting the release of
169 the funds pursuant to chapter 216, Florida Statutes. Release of
170 the funds is contingent upon the submission of an allocation
171 plan in accordance with the requirements of s. 1002.89(1),
172 Florida Statutes.

173 Section 6. For the 2024-2025 fiscal year, the sum of \$100
174 million in nonrecurring funds is appropriated from the Child
175 Care and Development Block Grant Trust Fund to the Department of

176 | Education for allocation to the early learning coalitions in
 177 | accordance with s. 1002.84(17), Florida Statutes. These funds
 178 | shall be placed in reserve. The department is authorized to
 179 | submit budget amendments requesting the release of the funds
 180 | pursuant to chapter 216, Florida Statutes. Release of the funds
 181 | is contingent upon the submission of an allocation plan
 182 | developed by the department in collaboration with the early
 183 | learning coalitions.

184 | Section 7. Except as otherwise expressly provided in this
 185 | act and except for this section, which shall take effect upon
 186 | this act becoming a law, this act shall take effect July 1,
 187 | 2024.