

From: [Peel, Jackson](#)
To: [Press](#)
Subject: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Senator Ausley and Representative Diamond File the Brighter Future Act, Early Learning Scholarship Program
Date: Friday, January 7, 2022 2:03:36 PM

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**Senator Lorraine Ausley and Representative Ben Diamond
File the Brighter Future Act, Early Learning Scholarship
Program**

Tallahassee, FL – As Florida families struggle to afford rising child care costs, **Representative Ben Diamond (D- St. Petersburg)** has filed the companion bill to **Senator Lorraine Ausley’s (D- Tallahassee) “Brighter Future Act.”** This legislation would create a scholarship program to ensure every Florida child has access to high-quality, early education ahead of kindergarten.

[HB 1299](#) and [SB 710](#), will establish the Early Learning Scholarship program, designed to close the opportunity gap for young Floridians by increasing access to high-quality early childhood education services.

“Quality early education is the most important investment we can make for our youngest children. This legislation creates more opportunities for parents to access quality care and ensure their kids success in school, and in life.” said **Senator Lorraine Ausley**.

Scholarships would be available to students under the age of six whose family earns between 185% and 300% of the federal poverty level, \$49,025 - \$79,500 annually for a family of four. This program would be targeted relief for families whose income does not allow them to qualify for existing child care subsidies but still struggle to afford the rising costs of high-quality care for their children.

“As the father of three young children, I know early childhood education is out of reach for too many working families in Pinellas and across Florida,” added **Representative Ben Diamond**. “The Brighter Future Act would allow working families to access the high-quality, early childhood education and care they need so they can succeed in the workforce today, and their children can build a strong foundation for their future.”

According to a January report from [Lending Tree](#), which analyzed data from the Center for American Progress and Child Care Aware of America, child care costs have increased by 159% amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The same report found that, on average, Florida families pay 13% of their household income on child care costs.

“Access to childcare is the #1 barrier to families returning to the workforce. The high cost of care for low-to-middle income families is forcing families to make the difficult decision to stay home because they can't afford childcare,” stated **Lindsay Carson**,

Chief Executive Officer of the Early Learning Coalition of Pinellas County.

Investments in early childhood education provide children the foundation they need for lifelong success and parents the freedom to build a brighter future for their families. The Brighter Future Act will be a critical step in growing a stronger and fairer economy that works for every hardworking family in Florida.

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