



**ELC Legislative Committee Meeting
December 1, 2017, 08:15 a.m.
ELC Executive Conference Room**

- | | | |
|-------|------------------------------------|----------------|
| I. | Welcome & Introductions | Alexander Soto |
| II. | Approval of Minutes | Alexander Soto |
| III. | Funding Formula | Evelio Torres |
| IV. | 2018 Legislative Priorities | Evelio Torres |
| V. | Accountability in School Readiness | Evelio Torres |
| VI. | Early Learning Bill | Evelio Torres |
| VII. | Public Comment | Alexander Soto |
| VIII. | Adjourn | Alexander Soto |



Legislative Committee Meeting
July 28, 2017, 11:30 a.m.
ELC Board Room

Committee Attendees: Alex Soto (Chair), Matthew Bruno

Committee Absentees:

Staff Attendees: Evelio Torres, Diana Ragbeer, Lisa Sanabria, Miguel Alfonso

I. Welcome and Introductions

David Lawrence

- A. Soto called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone.
- A quorum was established with one (2) voting members.

II. House/Senate Bills

Evelio Torres

- E. Torres discussed the following:
 - The Committee for Early Grade Success that was established by our state legislators as a means to assess the outcome of programs such as School Readiness and VPK.
 - The legislative agenda reviewed and a few changes will be made for 2017-2018.
 - Visits to our state senators and representative will be made in late August.

III. Public Comments

David Lawrence

IV. Adjourn

David Lawrence

Florida's Office of Early Learning distributes \$600 million a year using a decades-old methodology called "outdated and unexplained"

A lot has changed in Florida since 1999.

Demographics have shifted. Some counties have seen massive population growth, some have shrunk, others have gotten poorer while some got richer.

But one thing hasn't changed — the portion each county gets from the state to help pay for early learning for poor children.

This year, more than \$600 million in school readiness funding will go to 30 Early Learning Coalitions throughout the state. Those coalitions use the funds to pay day cares, preschools, churches and other child care providers. The money can be a shot in the arm for local economies, paying small businesses and helping poor parents work their way out of poverty.

But there is no explanation behind why each county gets what it gets.

Osceola County's population of poor children has increased by 82 percent and Manatee County's has gone up by 64 percent since 2005, while Madison County's number of poor children has decreased by 5 percent, according to KidsCount, a comprehensive report on child well-being by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. But each county still gets the same slice of the pie they always have.

An attempt to distribute funds fairly in 2012 revealed that Miami-Dade was overfunded by millions, while the Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida — representing Collier, Lee, Hendry and Glades counties — had been shorted more than \$10 million. Analyses done by the Office of Early Learning from 2008 to 2012 showed Sarasota County was consistently getting the short end of the stick.

Fewer kids in state-funded child care

Since 2005, Florida has seen a 19 percent drop in the number of children attending state-funded child care programs, according to data from the Office of Early Learning.

Manatee County's numbers are down 8 percent, from 3,973 children in 2005-06 to 3,673 last year.

Sarasota County's numbers are down by 21 percent, from 2,250 children in 2005-06 to 1,771 last year.

Funding shortages account for the lower numbers, said Rodney MacKinnon, director of the Office of Early Learning.

In 2011, an auditor called the Office of Early Learning's method for distributing hundreds of millions of dollars "outdated and unexplained." It was out of compliance with state law, which required the funding to be distributed based on equity for each county, the audit said.

Rather than fixing the methodology, lawmakers took over the dispersal of funds and rewrote the law, removing the words "based on equity" in 2013.

With such a large pot of cash and so many benefits tied to it, it would seem prudent to have a means of dispersing it fairly, says state Sen. Greg Steube, R-Sarasota.

"That doesn't make a whole heck of a lotta sense to me," he said.

He is not the only one perplexed by the current setup.

When asked what the current funding rates are based on, the state's Office of Early Learning was candid.

"No one seems to really know," OEL spokeswoman Cynthia Sucher said.

Sucher said the current distribution method was inherited when the agency began, and whatever methodology it is based on is long gone. She reached out to Matt Guse, who worked at the Office of Early Learning from 2008-2011. He was assistant director and briefly served as the interim agency head, but he said he didn't know the origin of the allocations either.

"Unfortunately, I'm not sure anyone knows. I asked the question when I was at OEL and no one knew," Guse wrote in an email.

Sucher dug deeper and said an employee in the budget office believes the funding allocations are derived from the total percentage of federal grants each county received at some unknown point before the Office of Early Learning existed.

That is what bothers Janet Kahn. Kahn, the executive director of the Early Learning Coalition of Sarasota County, said it isn't just a matter of wanting more funding. She objects to the unexplained methodology and the politics keeping that methodology in place.

"It's about equity. It's not about, 'Oh, I just want more money,'" Kahn said. "It's about how the money should be allocated fairly and with some assumption for determining how those funds are allocated."

Pushing for equity

School Readiness funds are the result of the School Readiness Act in 1999, designed to provide early learning opportunities for children in need. It is a separate pot of money from voluntary pre-kindergarten funds, which was established through a change in the state constitution in 2002.

Steube said he is planning to file legislation during the upcoming legislative session requiring School Readiness funds to be distributed based on a commonsense formula, but he will be picking a fight with the biggest kid on the block.

Miami-Dade, with its 18 House representatives and six senators, has long been the beneficiary of the static funding distribution.

“You got a whole contingent in House members and senators that represent that area,” Steube said. “But that still doesn’t mean there should be an unfair way the money is distributed throughout the state.”

The last time legislators tried to create a need-based funding formula, Miami-Dade thwarted the efforts.

In the mid-2000s, the OEL had developed a funding formula based on the population of poor children, but for several years the agency requested the formula only be applied toward any new dollars. Paltry or no increases each year meant the bulk of funding continued to be dished out without regard for changing demographics.

Then came the 2011 audit that called out the “unexplained” methodology.

“To allow a demonstration of compliance with governing law, it is necessary that the basis for OEL’s School Readiness Program funding formula be documented and updated to reflect equity for each county,” the report stated.

Mel Jurado, then newly appointed director of the OEL, took the audit seriously. Appointed in July 2011, Jurado began working with coalition leaders to develop a formula that made sense. She rejected the argument that a formula should only be applied to new money.

“This is not consistent with the statute that requires funding for early learning be equitably distributed,” Jurado stated in an undated memo making a case for the money to be distributed based on demographics.

Jurado led an effort to develop a formula for the distribution of \$547 million for the 2012-13 fiscal year. In June 2012 the OEL announced funding would be based

on the total number of children in poverty in each county, rather than the unchanging and unexplained allocations of years past.

The new formula revealed that a handful of coalitions were getting more than their fair share, and no one more than Miami-Dade.

The Miami-Dade Coalition would have lost \$3.7 million immediately and \$22.3 million over the next five years, according to news reports. Coalitions in Sarasota, Osceola and several other counties would have been the beneficiaries.

Sarasota coalition director Janet Kahn said Sarasota's ELC would have received \$120,000 in additional funds that first year, and a total of \$700,000 in new funding over the course of six years. At the time, the coalition received roughly \$5 million annually for school readiness programs.

But in December 2012, Gov. Rick Scott froze the new formula, responding to the outcry of coalitions that would lose money. Jurado resigned the day before the announcement came, according to a report from the News Service of Florida. She declined to be interviewed for this story.

"It's a win for the families. It's a win for the providers," Evelio Torres, director of the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade and Monroe counties told the News Service. "That is the right way to do this to ensure that we end up with a formula that takes into consideration everyone at the table."

But Susan Sunka, former director of the Early Learning Coalition of Osceola County, said Scott's actions were discouraging to less politically connected coalitions.

"The actions taken were not representative of taking care of all of Florida, just certain parts of Florida," Sunka said.

Legislative moves

In the following 2013 legislative session, Miami lawmaker Erik Fresen, the former House Education Appropriations Committee chairman who was recently sentenced to 60 days in jail for not paying taxes, included a \$5 million increase in the education budget to offset the funding lost by Miami-Dade and other coalitions during the brief implementation of the funding formula.

Before that session Fresen had predicted the coalitions would not stir up old fights over funding.

"They now seem to be in a much more kumbaya spirit," Fresen told the website SaintPetersblog. "I don't expect the same level of toxicity."

That same year, the Office of Early Learning's budget was moved under the direct control of the state Legislature, and the phrase "based upon equity for each county" was removed from the law. These actions meant that not only were lawmakers now directly in charge of allocations, but the unexplained methodology was no longer out of compliance with state law.

Joe Paterno, board secretary for the Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida, said Miami's political strength means any change to the status quo is going to be tough.

"They are very influential. They are going to fight if there is a legislative change, and they are going to have their political people trying to say that it's not good for their region," Paterno said. "But in the meantime, most of the other coalitions don't have sufficient funds to take care of the number of children."

Kahn said there has to be some rationale for how the money is dispersed.

"They don't look at the poverty or demographics anymore. We want them to do an analysis across the state of where kids in poverty are, where the opioid epidemic is happening," she said. "We need that type of analysis."

By the numbers

The tough reality lawmakers have to deal with is that any change to the current system will result in families losing services they are currently receiving. None of the coalitions are flush with cash, and despite increased academic study on the value of early child care, the number of children receiving care has been on a steady decline for years.

A study released earlier this year by researchers from Georgetown University, Duke University, the Brookings Institute and the University of Virginia, among others, reported on the value of preschool.

"Neuroscientists have estimated that the brain grows at an astounding rate over the first several years of life, reaching about 80 percent of its ultimate adult volume by age three," the report stated. "So, although the early years are not the only time when a child's development can be influenced, this evidence suggests that the year before kindergarten is an opportune period."

Those types of findings fuel advocates for early childhood education. They point to the benefits of a child being in a stimulating environment, rather than at home alone.

Fewer children in Florida attend early learning programs than they did 10 years ago. Statewide the number of children attending state-funded child care

programs has decreased by 19 percent since 2005, according to data from the Office of Early Learning.

Manatee County served 3,973 children in 2005-06 and served 3,673 last year, an 8 percent reduction. Sarasota County's numbers went down by 21 percent, going from 2,250 children in 2005-06 to 1,771 last year.

The reduction in services is entirely because of the funding shortages, said Office of Early Learning director Rodney MacKinnon, and not because of a shortage of child-care providers.

Coalitions put children on wait lists until funds are available, and one of the reasons changing the funding allocations has been so difficult is that every coalition has a wait list, not just the ones receiving less than they would under a new formula, MacKinnon said.

When Miami-Dade faced the budget cut in 2012, leaders spoke of their wait list with more than 19,000 children on it.

But prior to October 2016, there was no uniform standard for what it took for a child to be put on the wait list.

"There weren't consistent standards," MacKinnon said. "You had no idea if the person on the wait list was even low income."

In 2016, the Office of Early Learning implemented a standardized online portal where applicants can sign up for services, and if eligible be put on the wait list. Wait lists for several coalitions have dropped significantly since then.

Miami's average monthly wait list the year before the portal went into place was 7,409. Once the portal went into place it was reduced to 2,428. Over the last year, the monthly average wait list has dropped even further, to 1,285 per month, at times dipping lower than Manatee's wait list.

Miami-Dade has the largest population of children in poverty in the state. According to data from KidsCount, there were nearly 150,000 children living in poverty there in 2014. But Duval County, with only a third of the poverty population Miami-Dade has, has a wait list nearly double.

Broward County averaged 4,310 children on its wait list monthly, Duval averaged 3,997, Palm Beach averaged 3,432 and Hillsborough averaged 3,286 the same year Miami averaged 2,201.

MacKinnon said wait lists don't provide the whole picture. Cost of living, the types of services and the amount each coalition chooses to pay its providers all

play into how many kids end up getting services. If a coalition decides to prioritize care for infants and toddlers, which is more expensive than school-age children, then more children will end up on the wait list.

And Evelio Torres, director of the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade and Monroe counties, said he is tired of people pointing to Miami-Dade's short wait list and saying that shows how unfair the funding is.

"There hasn't been one person from any part of this state that has come to my office and said, 'Evelio, how did you eliminate the wait list?'" Torres said. "Show us what you did so we can try to do the same."

Torres said his coalition drove down the wait list by keeping administrative costs low and increasing accountability. He said he has increased the training for his staff to ensure only eligible families are on the list.

Torres said a funding formula based on need would only serve to "rob Peter to pay Paul," and he said he would feel that way even if he were overseeing the Osceola coalition, where the allocation hasn't changed despite an 82 percent increase in the child poverty rate since 2005.

"Moving money around the state just moves around the problem," Torres said. "It doesn't fix the problem."

In 2012 when Jurado advanced the new funding formula, Miami-Dade had to cut services to more than 1,000, according to reports from the News Service of Florida. But that was only part of the story, Paterno said.

"That's the message they get out there — you're taking money from our children," said Paterno, chairman of the Southwest ELC board. "But nobody said the message that the children in other areas who needed to be served are being served."

MacKinnon said he wants each coalition to get their fair share, but he couldn't support any measure that cut back on existing funds currently being provided to coalitions.

He, Torres and others have said they would support implementing a funding formula for any new money the school readiness program received, as long as the existing model is kept in place for the rest.

Paterno, who has advocated for a fair system with winners and losers, said he would support a funding formula, even if it was just for new money. He said that is a reasonable compromise due to the political realities.

“Smaller regions who don’t have political clout can’t fight that,” Paterno said. “If that’s the outcome everybody is agreeable to, I would support that.”

Last year, the program got a \$25 million boost, which was about a 3 percent increase. Under the compromise, that amount would have gone to counties based on the number of children living in poverty.

And the “unexplained methodology” would divide up the remaining 97 percent.

This story comes from a partnership between the Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading and the Herald-Tribune, funded by The Patterson Foundation, to cover school readiness, attendance, summer learning, healthy readers and parent engagement.



2018 Legislative Agenda

Early education. Lifelong success.

PRIORITIES:

- **Increase Funding to Improve Program Quality**
- **Improve Professional Development Standards**
- **Pay for Performance for Programs that Provide Quality Services**
- **Improve Industry Standards and Accountability**
- **Establish a High-Need Community Pay Differential/Tiered Reimbursement**
- **Raise Health and Safety Requirements to Improve Child Care Quality**

www.elcmdm.org

Questions regarding these legislative priorities should be directed to
Evelio Torres, President and CEO,
Early Learning Coalition of
Miami-Dade/Monroe
etorres@elcmdm.org

SCHOOL READINESS & VOLUNTARY PRE-KINDERGARTEN

- Increase School Readiness funding to address the waiting list of children 0 – 5 and improve the quality of care.
- Increase training requirements for staff in School Readiness programs, ensuring, at a minimum, all have specialized training for the ages of children in their care.
- Establish statewide program performance and effectiveness standards and supports.
- Establish a High-Need Community Pay Differential/Tiered Reimbursement to achieve equity across School Readiness providers.
- Enhance resources for families to inform their decision-making regarding selecting good early learning settings and supports for their children.
- Improve industry standards that must be met by every contracted program offering School Readiness and Voluntary Pre-kindergarten (VPK).
- Increase VPK Base Student Allocation to help programs meet State Board of Education performance standards.
- Revise the VPK assessment and readiness rate process to incorporate developmentally appropriate practices that address all domains of development and incorporates child progress.
- Improve Florida's national best practices ranking by reducing VPK staff to child ratios back to 1:10 or better.
- Improve teacher capacity by increasing the number of required in-service training hours and specialized training in prekindergarten.
- Improve children's access to health care to enhance educational and socio-emotional development.
- Funding Formula: Only applies to new dollars.
- Funding Formula: Waitlist numbers not included.





2018 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY

Maximize early learning investments through Pay for Performance, increased accountability and workforce development in early education

- Support **parent choice**. School Readiness is Florida's largest education voucher program. ELPFP helps to ensure **equitable access to quality** care in all communities, by allowing parents better options as they select which educational opportunity is best for their child.
- Develop and support a strong and **well-equipped early education workforce** in Florida.
- **Leverage local investments** in early learning quality initiatives.
- Improve quality in early learning by **supporting our small business partners**, the providers.
- Ensure early learning **programs receiving taxpayer funding**, are **accountable** for providing quality programs for children.

Investments in high quality early learning yield a \$7 to \$1 return on investment

An evidence-based approach to systemic quality improvement in Florida's early education programs with proven outcomes



Early Learning Performance Funding Project

\$45.5 million

Tiered payment differential based on demonstrated program quality and teacher child interactions linked to improved child outcomes.

Instructor incentives for completion and mastery of evidence based professional development strategies linked to improved quality and teacher performance.

Accountability

\$5.9 million

Define & assess process quality, adopt minimum standards and identify low quality providers.



Workforce Development

\$3 million

Early Learning Florida for specialized professional development

\$10 million

T.E.A.C.H. scholarships to increase the number of credentialed lead teachers



Effective Public Policies Benefiting Children, Youth and Families

GOAL: The Florida Children's Council supports effective prevention and early intervention **policies and investments that minimize families' long-term** dependence on government services.

TWO-GENERATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Develop more effective policies for families with young children in poverty by aligning targeted social **services that support children's development with workforce development services to increase family** economic self-sufficiency.

Eliminate fiscal cliffs that exist in subsidized child care and children's health insurance programs by establishing graduated phase-outs with increasing fee scales for the recipients aligning with increases in household income.

Integrate Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher programing and other housing initiatives with CareerSource Florida's **workforce development** programs to increase accessibility of affordable housing for families with young children in poverty.

EARLY LEARNING AND AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS

Maximize early learning investments by including education-based performance standards and a tiered-payment structure for early learning to prepare children for school success, to enhance the private business model of early learning, and to ensure accountability of public funds.

Provide quality School Readiness educational, enrichment programs for children of low-income working families, birth-12, in early learning and school-age care to support stronger student outcomes including grade level reading proficiency—an important indicator of later school success and high school graduation.

Maximize out-of-school time investments for K-12 students to foster grade promotion, graduation, and college and career preparedness.

Include differential-rate contracts with high quality early learning programs in high-poverty areas to increase family access to quality early learning programs.

Increase access for families to community resources through Help Me Grow to support the healthy development of young children.

Align increased investments in Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program for four-year-olds to quality benchmarks to improve kindergarten readiness and later school success.

Revise eligibility requirements for early learning to allow communities the flexibility to determine eligibility prioritization based on community need.

Streamline duplicative background screenings for personnel subject to public school and clearinghouse requirements.

HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT

Reduce the number of children served in costly emergency care and improve health outcomes by providing increased access to preventative physical, oral and behavioral health care for all eligible children through Florida KidCare.

Revise the eligibility requirements and parent fee structure in Florida KidCare to ensure continued access to preventative health care services.

Reduce infant mortality and disparities in birth outcomes by increasing the capacity of Healthy Start to serve families at highest risk, including those experiencing perinatal depression, substance use and intimate partner violence.

Support the healthy development of infants and young children by making trauma-informed care services accessible as needed, including services for substance-exposed newborns, and supports related to maternal/paternal depression, and substance abuse.

Facilitate increased access to quality oral health care targeting children served by KidCare and Medicaid.

CHILDREN WITH UNIQUE ABILITIES

Maximize the impact of intervention services and reduce more costly treatments for older children by managing caseloads and adequately serving infants and toddlers with significant delays or with pre-existing conditions in the Early Steps program.

Implement universal developmental screening and improve the process for referrals to the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS) for comprehensive assessment and access to **appropriate interventions to optimize investments supporting children's** healthy development.

Streamline the transition between Part C and Part B services to ensure families can navigate the changes between infant and toddler services offered through the Department of Health and preschool services offered through the Department of Education.

Ensure that children with unique abilities in state custody receive priority status from the Agency for Persons with Disabilities.

CHILD PROTECTION

Coordinate services and increase accessibility to preventative evidence-based substance abuse and mental health programs such as Community Action Teams (CATs) for children and families to decrease the incidence of child abuse and neglect; as well as maximize investments capable of disrupting existing cycles of substance abuse that contribute to generational and hereditary addiction.

Develop a network of high quality early learning programs with practitioners trained in trauma informed care for children in foster care with dedicated revenue.

Support young adults who are leaving foster care and are transitioning to independence.

Ensure that children who have been abused and/or neglected are provided with safe, stable and permanent homes.

Support the establishment and expansion of evidence-based programs that promote early intervention and safe, but expedited, permanency for the child such as Early Childhood Court.

JUVENILE JUSTICE

Maximize investments in youth through evidence-based prevention and diversion programs including those for Juvenile Assessment Centers (JACs) in areas of high utilization, Children in Need of Services/Families in Need of Services (CINS/FINS), multi-dimensional and functional family therapy, **and effective girls' and boys'** programs.

Reduce the number of children held in detention through increased access to evidence-based diversion programs and promote increased opportunities for career and technical education in the juvenile justice system.

Reduce the direct file of youth into Florida's adult prison system, especially for youth who commit non-violent crimes.

Permit state attorney discretion on filing charges against juveniles who receive concurrent civil citations rather than mandatory filing requirements.

Maximize investments for evidence-based youth mentoring programs to improve youth outcomes and ultimately reduce youth violence.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Maintain the ability for local communities to determine the best use of resources to develop, implement and administer programs that address the needs of children and families.

Support evidence-based policies and programs to ensure healthy, educated children, stable families, and safe and supportive communities.

Ensure equitable funding for programs affecting children and families that are adequate and respect regional economic differences.

Maximize all available revenue streams for strategies that support child development and economic stabilization.

Minimize requirements and regulations to local government or community services that impede upon ability to provide service to the community.

Support programs that promote family engagement.

Ensure the health, safety and well-being of children in all publicly funded programs.

Support programs that promote the ability for families to continue toward economic self-sufficiency **without losing access to services that support children's development.**



**2016-2017 STATE LEGISLATIVE PACKAGE ISSUE SUBMISSION FORM
DEADLINE: AUGUST 26, 2016**

FULL RESPONSES MUST BE PROVIDED FOR ALL QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS.

Incomplete forms will not be accepted. Please submit supporting documentation: reports, studies and background papers.

COMMITTEE:

EDUCATION

PRESENTED BY:

Jessica Scher, United Way of Miami-Dade

Donovan LeeSin, The Children's Trust

Diana Ragbeer and Evelio Torres, Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade and Monroe

Vance Aloupis, Jr., Children's Movement of Florida

ISSUE: High Quality Early Education

ROLE THE CHAMBER IS BEING ASKED TO TAKE (please select one): () PRIORITY (ACTION) (X) SUPPORT () MONITOR

I. Issue Brief (attach proposed authorizing or appropriations legislation if applicable):

- **Increase** School Readiness program funding, linked to quality and accountability.
- **Restore** Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten program funding to \$2,677/student (2007, pre-recession level).
- **Appropriate** \$2M for 'Help Me Grow', a parent information and referral resource.

II. Background: Describe the current situation and the community/economic impact of the proposed change (refer to Early Learning brief, below)

a) Present situation and the change that is desired: (refer to Early Learning brief, below)

b) Impact of the proposed legislation on the desired change: (refer to Early Learning brief, below)

c) Scope of statewide interest: (refer to Early Learning brief, below)

d) Additional background including past Chamber advocacy positions and results:

The GMCC has supported quality Early Learning as part of its Education Agenda for the past decade. For the past three years there have been small increases in the Early Learning budget.

III. Appropriation of funds (if applicable)?

- Increase School Readiness funding to improve accountability and expand access to quality childcare
- Restore VPK funding to 2007 level
- Maintain 'Help Me Grow' in Florida

- a. **Fiscal year(s):** 2018-19 and continuing
- b. **Amount:** \$85 million for School Readiness; \$2M for Help Me Grow; \$40 M VPK (to restore funding to 20007: $\$2,677 - \$2,437 = \$240$ per-child increase x 169,000 4-yr-olds in Florida = \$40 million)
- c. **From what budget will the appropriation be made?** GR - Education

IV. In what way does this positively affect the business community?

Quality early learning is the foundation for a strong, stable, and competitive workforce. More than 85% of the foundation for communication, critical thinking, problem solving, and teamwork -- skills that employers nationwide cite as critical to success in the workplace -- is developed by the age of five. Research shows that investing now brings greater economic returns later.

Quality childcare provides essential supports to working families that contributes to productivity, retention and business success. Working families depend on quality childcare, which increases productivity and reduces absenteeism.

Childcare is also an essential industry employing over 75,000 Floridians (*according to the US Census and Bureau of Labor Statistics*). Childcare businesses make significant contributions to local economies – adding over \$1.1 billion in wages and \$1.8 billion for industries that support childcare businesses in Florida

And finally, children who are ready for school will succeed and become the workforce we'll need for our community's growth and prosperity.

Our priorities reflect a bipartisan consensus that high quality early care and education is essential not only to healthy child development but also to a healthy economy and a strong community.

V. Known or potential support:

Private child care and early education providers (small businesses); The Children's Trust/Florida Children's Services Council, Early Learning Coalitions; United Way of Miami-Dade, Miami Dade County Public Schools, Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce, Florida Chamber of Commerce

VI. Known or potential opposition: None

**Thank you for participating in the Greater Miami Chamber's legislative process
Please feel free to contact Governmental Affairs should you have any questions**

Submissions:

GovAffairs@miamichamber.com

**For internal use only
Date resented:
Action by Governmental**

EARLY LEARNING POLICY BRIEF

The foundation for communication, critical thinking, problem solving, and teamwork - skills that employers cite as critical to workplace success - is largely developed by age five. High quality early learning opportunities, as well as early detection and treatment of childhood developmental and behavioral challenges, are essential for children's development and later success in school and in life.

By age three, there is a 30 million word gap between children in poverty and those in higher income families. By the time children from low-income families enter kindergarten they are 12-14 months below national norms in language and pre-reading skills, a "readiness gap" that leads to a persistent achievement gap.

Investments in quality early learning result in savings in later years (e.g., reductions in grade retention and special education referrals, and an increase in high school graduates who are college and career ready). However, only 4 percent of Florida's education budget is spent on programs that benefit children in the early years.

School Readiness Program: Over 8,500 small and large private businesses provide affordable childcare through the School Readiness (SR) program, which serves over 203,000 children of Florida's low-income working families. Current funding for SR (2017-2018) is approximately \$12 million below 2005-2006 levels and many SR programs cannot afford to implement industry-accepted benchmarks of quality when serving children due to low provider reimbursement rates. Linking reimbursement to provider performance, and improving accountability through coordinated and developmentally appropriate assessments, will improve childcare quality and reduce the readiness gap.

Family Supports: Early childhood is the optimal time for detection and treatment of children with developmental or behavioral concerns. Help Me Grow links families through a centralized 2-1-1 call center so that local resources and programs can quickly and effectively address parents' concerns about their young children's health, development, behavior and learning. Restoring HMG funding to \$2million will allow the program to help parents access appropriate community supports including information and referrals for developmental screenings.

Voluntary Prekindergarten: In Florida the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) program is available to all 4-year olds and access is among the highest in the country. However, the [National Institute for Early Education Research](#) ranks Florida's VPK 35th among 38 states in per pupil funding and reports that the program meets only three of 10 nationally recommended standards. Current VPK per-child funding of \$2,437 is less than it was five years ago and far below the 2013 national average of \$4,026 per child.

Child success is essential to Florida's future, and taxpayer investments should be made wisely. The benefits of early care and education depend on program quality and to appropriate supports including developmental screening and parent information. These require a commitment to adequate funding, linked to accountability.

Align increased investments in Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program for four-year-olds to quality benchmarks to improve kindergarten readiness and later school success.

Revise eligibility requirements for early learning to allow communities the flexibility to determine eligibility prioritization based on community need.

Streamline duplicative background screenings for personnel subject to public school and clearinghouse requirements.

HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT

Reduce the number of children served in costly emergency care and improve health outcomes by providing increased access to preventative physical, oral and behavioral health care for all eligible children through Florida KidCare.

Revise the eligibility requirements and parent fee structure in Florida KidCare to ensure continued access to preventative health care services.

Reduce infant mortality and disparities in birth outcomes by increasing the capacity of Healthy Start to serve families at highest risk, including those experiencing perinatal depression, substance use and intimate partner violence.

Support the healthy development of infants and young children by making trauma-informed care services accessible as needed, including services for substance-exposed newborns, and supports related to maternal/paternal depression, and substance abuse.

Facilitate increased access to quality oral health care targeting children served by KidCare and Medicaid.

CHILDREN WITH UNIQUE ABILITIES

Maximize the impact of intervention services and reduce more costly treatments for older children by managing caseloads and adequately serving infants and toddlers with significant delays or with pre-existing conditions in the Early Steps program.

Implement universal developmental screening and improve the process for referrals to the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS) for comprehensive assessment and access to **appropriate interventions to optimize investments supporting children's** healthy development.

Streamline the transition between Part C and Part B services to ensure families can navigate the changes between infant and toddler services offered through the Department of Health and preschool services offered through the Department of Education.

Ensure that children with unique abilities in state custody receive priority status from the Agency for Persons with Disabilities.

CHILD PROTECTION

Coordinate services and increase accessibility to preventative evidence-based substance abuse and mental health programs such as Community Action Teams (CATs) for children and families to decrease the incidence of child abuse and neglect; as well as maximize investments capable of disrupting existing cycles of substance abuse that contribute to generational and hereditary addiction.

Develop a network of high quality early learning programs with practitioners trained in trauma informed care for children in foster care with dedicated revenue.

Support young adults who are leaving foster care and are transitioning to independence.

Ensure that children who have been abused and/or neglected are provided with safe, stable and permanent homes.

Support the establishment and expansion of evidence-based programs that promote early intervention and safe, but expedited, permanency for the child such as Early Childhood Court.

JUVENILE JUSTICE

Maximize investments in youth through evidence-based prevention and diversion programs including those for Juvenile Assessment Centers (JACs) in areas of high utilization, Children in Need of Services/Families in Need of Services (CINS/FINS), multi-dimensional and functional family therapy, **and effective girls' and boys'** programs.

Reduce the number of children held in detention through increased access to evidence-based diversion programs and promote increased opportunities for career and technical education in the juvenile justice system.

Reduce the direct file of youth into Florida's adult prison system, especially for youth who commit non-violent crimes.

Permit state attorney discretion on filing charges against juveniles who receive concurrent civil citations rather than mandatory filing requirements.

Maximize investments for evidence-based youth mentoring programs to improve youth outcomes and ultimately reduce youth violence.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Maintain the ability for local communities to determine the best use of resources to develop, implement and administer programs that address the needs of children and families.

Support evidence-based policies and programs to ensure healthy, educated children, stable families, and safe and supportive communities.

Ensure equitable funding for programs affecting children and families that are adequate and respect regional economic differences.

Maximize all available revenue streams for strategies that support child development and economic stabilization.

Minimize requirements and regulations to local government or community services that impede upon ability to provide service to the community.

Support programs that promote family engagement.

Ensure the health, safety and well-being of children in all publicly funded programs.

Support programs that promote the ability for families to continue toward economic self-sufficiency **without losing access to services that support children's development.**

Proposed Accountability Strategy for the School Readiness Program

Background

There is considerable opportunity to strengthen the School Readiness program with the implementation of quality standards and aligned accountability.

Recent research by Stanford University found that by 18 months of age toddlers from low-income families are already several months behind children of more affluent families in language proficiency; these delays are too often compounded to the point that children can be dramatically behind in reading by third grade, which is the strongest predictor of high school graduation. Quality early learning programs improve language skills and help reduce the achievement gap to increase kindergarten readiness and early grade success.

Florida's School Readiness program is designed to provide children at greatest risk of school failure with enriching early learning opportunities that prepare them for kindergarten and early grade success. Currently, funding is approximately \$30 million below the level from more than a decade ago. As the legislature works to improve third grade reading outcomes for students, there is great benefit and need to strengthen accountability and invest strategically in the School Readiness program.

Florida has among the lowest payment rates in the nation, undermining the ability of Florida's child care industry to provide quality early learning programs. Through a targeted policy and funding strategy, Florida can improve the quality of early learning programs, ensure accountability of public funds, and support improved outcomes for children.

What is Needed

In order to develop a statewide accountability structure that provides assurances that children at greatest risk of school failure are in enriching early learning programs that prepare them for kindergarten and beyond, there is need for:

- A clear definition of quality based on core standards and practices that must be in place to provide assurances of strong teaching practices that best support children's development;
- Program outcomes to validate that School Readiness is valuable as an effective early education program;
- The ability for coalitions to set eligibility priorities based on the individual needs of each community; and
- Substantial funding increases in early learning with appropriate assurances that funds will be invested in quality early learning programs for children.

Policy Priorities

There are two types of **Quality Standards** that can be measured as part of an accountability system: **Structural** and **Process Quality**.

- **Structural quality** is addressed through accreditation which involves measurement on key aspects of program delivery including; teacher/child ratios, the learning environment, and materials. Currently Gold Seal accredited programs receive up to a 20% cost differential for School Readiness to offset the cost of providing care in accordance with these increased standards.
 - **Policy Recommendation:** The School Readiness payment differential should be 20% for Gold

Seal accrediting entities that have demonstrable impact on child outcomes.

- **Process quality**, or program assessment, measures the quality and caliber of teaching practices that facilitates young children’s development. It is well documented in research that the number one predictor of positive child outcomes is the interactions between a teacher and the child.
 - **Policy Recommendation:** Define process quality in law to establish educational standards and include a reporting structure for identifying provider quality on a continuum from low quality to high quality.

To strengthen accountability and provide consistency in the application of **Quality Standards** for early learning programs, there is need to revise the **School Readiness Statewide Provider Contracts**.

- Currently, **School Readiness Statewide Provider Contracts** do not include Quality Standards. The only requirements are related to health and safety.
 - **Policy Recommendation:** Incorporate standards for **process quality** as a requirement of the agreement. A provider that has scored ‘low performing’ on program assessment will have 12 months to complete a corrective action plan. If after the 12 months the provider did not increase the accountability score to ‘emerging quality’ or higher the School Readiness contract will be terminated.¹ Providers that meet quality standards will be eligible for a payment differential. This will provide a mechanism for locally addressing low payment rates in alignment with quality programming.

With current variations in School Readiness payment rates, capacity, and quality there is need for local flexibility to effectively implement **Quality Standards**.

- **Early Learning Coalition Plans** provide a mechanism for documenting approach inclusive of approval from the Office of Early Learning.
 - **Policy Recommendation:** Through the Early Learning Coalition Plan process, communities will document quality improvement strategies that align to the Quality Standards, as well as information on differential payment rates for quality programs, use of contracted slots as appropriate, and assurances of preserving parental choice.

Funding Priorities

Focused investments that strategically increase the payment rates for providers in alignment with accountability and quality standards are needed. Specific funding recommendations include:

- Continued funding of **\$15.5 million** for the Performance Funding Project designed to provide financial incentives for achieving and/or maintaining quality standards;
- An appropriation of **\$5.5 million** for program assessment to determine the level of quality for early learning providers that serve a substantial number of School Readiness children;
- An appropriation of **\$10 million** for T.E.A.C.H. scholarships to increase the number of lead teachers in early learning with a child development credential;
- An appropriation of **\$3 million** for Early Learning Florida to provide specialized professional development;
- An appropriation of **\$100,000** for an evaluation of Gold Seal accrediting entities; and
- An annual increased investment of **\$30 million** to improve and sustain the quality of School Readiness programs. This investment will support increased reimbursement rates, provide for contracted slots, or

¹ The only exceptions to this policy would be if the provider is located in a ‘child care desert’ where there is insufficient capacity in a community to provide alternate care options. In that case, the early learning coalitions would continue the corrective action plan to support continuous quality improvement on instructional strategies.

support quality initiatives to providers based on a clear definition of quality tied to recognized industry standards.

Positive Impact to the System

Putting parameters that align with these concepts into law would enhance early learning system development in meaningful ways:

1. Provide basic definitions of structural and process quality with accountability parameters;
2. Reduce the number of low quality School Readiness providers receiving taxpayer funds;
3. Provide effective means for addressing local system variances within a statewide reporting structure;
and
4. Ensure that communities are able to focus investments for children most at risk for school failure.

DRAFT

Proposed Accountability Strategy for the School Readiness (“SR”) Program

Challenges

- ✓ Research has documented that before there is an achievement gap there is a readiness gap identifiable as early as 18 months for children from low-income families.
- ✓ Currently, funding is approximately \$30 million below the level from more than a decade ago.
- ✓ Florida’s average reimbursement rate is approximately 50% of the actual cost of care, undermining the ability for the child care industry to invest in quality programming.

Proposed Solutions

- Establish a clear definition of quality
- Institute accountability
- Provide appropriate funding
- Serve children at greatest risk of school failure

Policy Recommendations

Define Structural quality: Guarantee the current 20% payment differential for Gold Seal accrediting entities that have demonstrable impact on child outcomes.

Define Process quality: Given the number one predictor of child success is the interaction between teachers and children, define process quality in law and include a reporting structure for identifying provider quality on a continuum from low quality to high quality..

Address Accountability: Incorporate standards for process quality as a requirement of the provider contracts. ‘Low performing’ providers will have 12 months to complete a corrective action plan and if after the 12 months there is no improvement the contract will be terminated.¹ Providers that meet quality standards will be eligible for a payment differential.

Maintain Local Flexibility: Through the Early Learning Coalition Plan process, communities will: document quality improvement strategies that align to the newly defined Quality Standards; differential payment rates for quality programs; use of contracted slots; and assurances of preserving parental choice.

Funding Priorities

- **\$15.5 million** recurring for the continuation of the Performance Funding Project;
- **\$5.5 million** for a base line assessment for every early learning provider that serves a certain percentage of School Readiness children;
- **\$10 million** for T.E.A.C.H. scholarships to increase the number of credentialed lead teachers;
- **\$3 million** for Early Learning Florida to provide specialized professional development;
- **\$100,000** for evaluation of Gold Seal accrediting entities; and
- **\$30 million** recurring investment to pay providers a reimbursement rate, provide for contracted slots, or support quality initiatives that allows SR programs to improve and sustain quality.

Impact to the System

1. Reduce the number of low quality SR providers receiving taxpayer funds.
2. Improve language skills and help reduce the achievement gap to increase kindergarten readiness and early grade success.

¹ The only exceptions to this policy would be if the provider is located in a ‘child care desert.’

3. Ensure that communities are able to focus services for the children most at risk for school failure.

DRAFT

A Bill Relating to Early Learning

Section 1. Paragraphs (j-z) of subsection (2) and paragraph (a) of subsection (5) of section 1002.82, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

(2) The office shall:

(j) Coordinate with the Child Care Services Program Office of the Department of Children and Families or its contracted provider for a triennial evaluation of accrediting agencies approved under s. 402.81 to determine which accrediting associations' requirements and processes positively impact child outcomes. Based on the findings of the evaluation the Office of Early Learning shall set a payment differential for each child care provider that has been accredited by an accrediting agency identified as positively impacting child outcomes in the final report at a 20% differential rate higher than the coalition's base approved reimbursement rate for each care level and unit of care.

(k)~~(j)~~ Develop and adopt standards and benchmarks that address the age-appropriate progress of children in the development of school readiness skills. The standards for children from birth to 5 years of age in the school readiness program must be aligned with the performance standards adopted for children in the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program and must address the following domains:

1. Approaches to learning.
2. Cognitive development and general knowledge.
3. Numeracy, language, and communication.
4. Physical development.
5. Self-regulation.

~~(l)(k)~~ Select assessments that are valid, reliable, and developmentally appropriate for use as preassessment and postassessment for the age ranges specified in the coalition plans. The assessments must be designed to measure progress in the domains of the performance standards adopted pursuant to paragraph (j), provide appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities and English language learners, and be administered by qualified individuals, consistent with the publisher's instructions.

~~(m)(l)~~ Adopt a list of approved curricula that meet the performance standards for the school readiness program and establish a process for the review and approval of a provider's curriculum that meets the performance standards.

(n) Adopt program assessment requirements for school readiness program providers that measure the quality of teacher-child interactions using a research based observation tool. Requirements shall include at a minimum the adoption of quality measures, a process for participation, exemptions, improvement through the completion of an improvement plan, and removal from the school readiness program for failure to meet minimum quality measures for a period of up to 5 years.

~~(o)(m)~~ Adopt by rule a standard statewide provider contract to be used with each school readiness program provider with standardized attachments by provider type. The office shall publish a copy of the standard statewide provider contract on its website. The standard statewide contract shall include, at a minimum, health and safety, contracted slots if applicable in accordance with the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014, section 658E(c)(2)(A), quality improvement strategies if

applicable, and program assessment requirements and provisions for provider probation, termination for cause, and emergency termination for those actions or inactions of a provider that pose an immediate and serious danger to the health, safety, or welfare of the children. The standard statewide provider contract shall also include appropriate due process procedures. During the pendency of an appeal of a termination, the provider may not continue to offer its services. Any provision imposed upon a provider that is inconsistent with, or prohibited by, law is void and unenforceable.

(p)(n) Establish a single statewide information system that each coalition must use for the purposes of managing the single point of entry, tracking children's progress, coordinating services among stakeholders, determining eligibility of children, tracking child attendance, and streamlining administrative processes for providers and early learning coalitions.

(q)(e) Adopt by rule standardized procedures for coalitions to use when monitoring the compliance of school readiness program providers with the terms of the standard statewide provider contract.

(r)(p) Monitor and evaluate the performance of each early learning coalition in administering the school readiness program, ensuring proper payments for school readiness program services, implementing the coalition's school readiness program plan, and administering the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program. These monitoring and performance evaluations must include, at a minimum, onsite monitoring of each coalition's finances, management, operations, and programs.

(s)~~(q)~~ Work in conjunction with the Bureau of Federal Education Programs within the Department of Education to coordinate readiness and voluntary prekindergarten services to the populations served by the bureau.

(t)~~(r)~~ Administer a statewide toll-free Warm-Line to provide assistance and consultation to child care facilities and family day care homes regarding health, developmental, disability, and special needs issues of the children they are serving, particularly children with disabilities and other special needs. The office shall:

1. Annually inform child care facilities and family day care homes of the availability of this service through the child care resource and referral network under s. 1002.92.

2. Expand or contract for the expansion of the Warm-Line to maintain at least one Warm-Line in each early learning coalition service area.

(u)~~(s)~~ Develop and implement strategies to increase the supply and improve the quality of child care services for infants and toddlers, children with disabilities, children who receive care during nontraditional hours, children in underserved areas, and children in areas that have significant concentrations of poverty and unemployment.

(v)~~(t)~~ Establish preservice and inservice training requirements that address, at a minimum, school readiness child development standards, health and safety requirements, and social-emotional behavior intervention models, which may include positive behavior intervention and support models.

(w)~~(u)~~ Establish standards for emergency preparedness plans for school readiness program providers.

(x)~~(v)~~ Establish group sizes.

~~(y)(w)~~ Establish staff-to-children ratios that do not exceed the requirements of s. 402.302(8) or (11) or s. 402.305(4), as applicable, for school readiness program providers.

~~(z)(x)~~ Establish eligibility criteria, including limitations based on income and family assets, in accordance with s. 1002.87 and federal law.

(5) By January 1 of each year, the office shall annually publish on its website a report of its activities conducted under this section. The report must include a summary of the coalitions' annual reports, a statewide summary, and the following:

(a) An analysis of early learning activities throughout the state, including the school readiness program and the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program.

8. The number of school readiness program providers who have completed a program assessment and the number of providers who have been determined low quality, emerging quality, or high quality as determined by the Office of Early Learning based on the results of a research based observation tool that measures the quality of teacher-child interactions.

~~9.8-~~ The total number of provider contracts revoked and the reasons for revocation.

Section 2. Paragraph (b-d) of subsection (2) of section 1002.85 Florida Statutes, are amended, to read:

1002.85 Early learning coalition plans.-

(2) Each early learning coalition must biennially submit a school readiness program plan to the office before the expenditure of funds. A coalition may not implement its school readiness program plan until it receives approval

from the office. A coalition may not implement any revision to its school readiness program plan until the coalition submits the revised plan to and receives approval from the office. If the office rejects a plan or revision, the coalition must continue to operate under its previously approved plan. The plan must include, but is not limited to:

(b) A community needs assessment that identifies through data analysis the needs of families, children and providers within the coalition's county or multi-county region. The minimum number of children to be served by care level.

(c) The coalition's procedures for implementing the requirements of this part, including:

1. Single point of entry.
2. Uniform waiting list.
3. Eligibility and enrollment processes and local eligibility priorities for children in accordance with s. 1002.87.
4. Parent access and choice.
5. Sliding fee scale and policies on applying the waiver or reduction of fees in accordance with s. 1002.84(8).
6. Use of preassessments and postassessments, as applicable.
7. Payment rate and capacity analysis that supports the coalition's payment rate schedule.
8. Use of contracted slots, as applicable based on the results of the needs assessment in section (b).

(d) A detailed description of the coalition's quality activities and services, including, but not limited to:

1. Quality improvement strategies that strengthen teaching practices and increase child outcomes.
2. Resource and referral and school-age child care.

3.2. Infant and toddler early learning.

4.3. Inclusive early learning programs.

Section 3. Subsections (1), (2), (3), and (7) of section 1002.87, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

1002.87 School readiness program; eligibility and enrollment.—

(1) Each early learning coalition shall give priority for participation in the school readiness program as follows:

(a) Priority shall be given first to a child younger than 13 years of age from a family that includes a parent who is receiving temporary cash assistance under chapter 414 and subject to the federal work requirements.

(b) Priority shall be given next to an at-risk child younger than 9 years of age, including a child residing at a domestic violence center under s. 39.905.

(c) Subsequent priority shall be given, based on the early learning coalition's needs assessment as described in s. 1002.85(2)(b), to children who meet the following criteria:

1. A child who is younger than 13 years of age from a working family that is economically disadvantaged.

~~—(c) Priority shall be given next to a child from birth to the beginning of the school year for which the child is eligible for admission to kindergarten in a public school under s. 1003.21(1)(a)2., who is from a working family that is economically disadvantaged, and may include such child's eligible siblings, beginning with the school year in which the sibling is eligible for admission to kindergarten in a public school under s. 1003.21(1)(a)2., until the beginning of the school year in which the sibling is eligible to begin 6th grade, provided that the first priority for~~

~~funding an eligible sibling is local revenues available to the coalition for funding direct services.~~

2. ~~(d)Priority shall be given next to~~ A child of a parent who transitions from the work program into employment as described in s. 445.032 from birth to the beginning of the school year for which the child is eligible for admission to kindergarten in a public school under s. 1003.21(1)(a)2.

3. ~~(e)Priority shall be given next to~~ An at-risk child who is at least 9 years of age but younger than 13 years of age. An at-risk child whose sibling is enrolled in the school readiness program within an eligibility priority category listed in paragraphs (a)-(b) shall be given priority over other children who are eligible under this paragraph.

~~(f)Priority shall be given next to~~ A child who is younger than 13 years of age from a working family that is economically disadvantaged. A child who is eligible under this paragraph whose sibling is enrolled in the school readiness program under paragraph (c) shall be given priority over other children who are eligible under this paragraph

4. ~~(g)Priority shall be given next to~~ A child of a parent who transitions from the work program into employment as described in s. 445.032 who is younger than 13 years of age.

5. ~~(h)Priority shall be given next to~~ A child who has special needs, has been determined eligible as a student with a disability, has a current individual education plan with a Florida school district, and is not younger than 3 years of age. A special needs child eligible under this paragraph remains eligible until the child is eligible for

admission to kindergarten in a public school under s. 1003.21(1)(a)2.

6. ~~(i) Notwithstanding paragraphs (a)-(d), priority shall be given last to~~ A child who otherwise meets one of the eligibility criteria in paragraphs (a)-(c) but who is also enrolled concurrently in the federal Head Start Program and the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program.

(2) A school readiness program provider may be paid only for authorized hours of care provided for a child in the school readiness program. A child enrolled in the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program may receive care from the school readiness program if the child is eligible according to the eligibility priorities and criteria established pursuant to subsection (1) ~~in this section.~~

(3) Contingent upon the availability of funds, a coalition shall enroll eligible children, including those from its waiting list, according to the eligibility priorities and criteria established pursuant to subsection (1) ~~in this section.~~

(7) If a coalition disenrolls children from the school readiness program, the coalition must disenroll the children in reverse order of the eligibility priorities and criteria established pursuant to listed in subsection (1) beginning with children from families with the highest family incomes. A notice of disenrollment must be sent to the parent and school readiness program provider at least 2 weeks before disenrollment to provide adequate time for the parent to arrange alternative care for the child. However, an at-risk child may not be disenrolled from the program without the written approval of the Child Welfare Program Office of the Department of Children and Families or the community-based lead agency.

Section 4. Paragraph (h) of subsection (1) of section 1002.88, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

1002.88 School readiness program provider standards; eligibility to deliver the school readiness program.—

(1) To be eligible to deliver the school readiness program, a school readiness program provider must:

(h) Subject to legislative funding participate in program assessment in accordance with s. 1002.82(2)(m).

(i) Subject to legislative funding participate in quality improvement strategies as required.

~~(j)(h)~~—Collaborate with the respective early learning coalition to complete initial screening for each child, aged 6 weeks to kindergarten eligibility, within 45 days after the child's first or subsequent enrollment, to identify a child who may need individualized supports.

~~(k)(i)~~ Implement minimum standards for child discipline practices that are age-appropriate and consistent with the requirements in s. 402.305(12). Such standards must provide that children not be subjected to discipline that is severe, humiliating, or frightening or discipline that is associated with food, rest, or toileting. Spanking or any other form of physical punishment is prohibited.

~~(l)(j)~~ Obtain and keep on file record of the child's immunizations, physical development, and other health requirements as necessary, including appropriate vision and hearing screening and examination, within 30 days after enrollment.

~~(m)(k)~~ Implement before-school or after-school programs that meet or exceed the requirements of s. 402.305(5), (6), and (7).

~~(n)(1)~~ For a provider that is not an informal provider, maintain general liability insurance and provide the coalition with written evidence of general liability insurance coverage, including coverage for transportation of children if school readiness program children are transported by the provider. A provider must obtain and retain an insurance policy that provides a minimum of \$100,000 of coverage per occurrence and a minimum of \$300,000 general aggregate coverage. The office may authorize lower limits upon request, as appropriate. A provider must add the coalition as a named certificateholder and as an additional insured. A provider must provide the coalition with a minimum of 10 calendar days' advance written notice of cancellation of or changes to coverage. The general liability insurance required by this paragraph must remain in full force and effect for the entire period of the provider contract with the coalition.

~~(o)(m)~~ For a provider that is an informal provider, comply with the provisions of paragraph ~~(m)(1)~~ or maintain homeowner's liability insurance and, if applicable, a business rider. If an informal provider chooses to maintain a homeowner's policy, the provider must obtain and retain a homeowner's insurance policy that provides a minimum of \$100,000 of coverage per occurrence and a minimum of \$300,000 general aggregate coverage. The office may authorize lower limits upon request, as appropriate. An informal provider must add the coalition as a named certificateholder and as an additional insured. An informal provider must provide the coalition with a minimum of 10 calendar days' advance written notice of cancellation of or changes to coverage. The general liability insurance required by this paragraph must remain in full force and

effect for the entire period of the provider's contract with the coalition.

~~(p)(n)~~ Obtain and maintain any required workers' compensation insurance under chapter 440 and any required reemployment assistance or unemployment compensation coverage under chapter 443.

~~(q)(o)~~ Notwithstanding paragraph (1), for a provider that is a state agency or a subdivision thereof, as defined in s. 768.28(2), agree to notify the coalition of any additional liability coverage maintained by the provider in addition to that otherwise established under s. 768.28. The provider shall indemnify the coalition to the extent permitted by s. 768.28.

~~(r)(p)~~ Execute the standard statewide provider contract adopted by the office.

~~(s)(q)~~ Operate on a full-time and part-time basis and provide extended-day and extended-year services to the maximum extent possible without compromising the quality of the program to meet the needs of parents who work.

Section 4. Paragraph (b) of subsection (6) of section 1002.89, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

(6) Costs shall be kept to the minimum necessary for the efficient and effective administration of the school readiness program with the highest priority of expenditure being direct services for eligible children. However, no more than 5 percent of the funds described in subsection (5) may be used for administrative costs and no more than 22 percent of the funds described in subsection (5) may be used in any fiscal year for any combination of administrative costs, quality activities, and nondirect services as follows:

2. Awarding grants and providing financial support to school readiness program providers and their staff to assist them in meeting applicable state requirements for program assessment, child care performance standards, implementing developmentally appropriate curricula and related classroom resources that support curricula, providing literacy supports, and providing continued professional development and training. Any grants awarded pursuant to this subparagraph shall comply with ss.215.971 and 287.058.

Section 5. For fiscal year 2018-2019 the nonrecurring sum of \$6,000,000 from the Child Care and Development Block Grant Trust Fund is appropriated to the Office of early Learning to fund sections 1002.82(2)(j) and 1002.82 (2)(n).

Section 6. This act shall take effect July 1, 2018.