

Chapter 54

2023 Regular Session

Subject Early Education Omnibus Bill

Bill H.F. 2292

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Date May 25, 2023

Overview

H.F. 2292 is the early education omnibus bill. This act makes policy changes to and appropriates money for various early education programs.

Summary

Section	Description
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1	Distribution of appropriation. [Head Start]
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Provides that the state appropriation for Head Start programs may be used for costs associated with program operations, infrastructure, or reconfiguration to serve children from birth to age five in center-based services. Designates 10.72 percent of the total state appropriation to Tribal Head Start programs and specifies an order in which the state appropriation must be distributed.

2	Great start scholarships program.
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Directs the commissioner of children, youth, and families to establish and develop the great start scholarships program. Provides that the program must include: (1) scholarships that provide financial assistance to voluntarily participating families; (2) eligibility for any families with at least one child who is not yet in kindergarten; (3) provider eligibility for licensed child care programs that participate in Parent Aware, school-based programs, and Head Start programs; (4) a unified, integrated, and simple online application process; (5) an integrated electronic attendance tracking system and payments system; and (6) a schedule for scholarships that ensures no participating family pays more than seven percent of annual income for early care and learning for children from birth to kindergarten.

Requires the commissioner to submit a report to the legislature on the progress toward establishing the program by July 1, 2026. Directs the commissioner to have the program's administrative structures and systems in place by July 1, 2028, to the extent allowed under state and federal laws and with available funding.

This section is effective July 1, 2024.

Section	Description
3	<p>Screening program.</p> <p>Requires a district screening program to include virtual developmental screening for families who request one based on their immunocompromised health status or other health conditions.</p>
4	<p>Developmental screening aid.</p> <p>Increases the amount of state aid paid to school districts for each child who is screened prior to or within 30 days of enrolling in public school kindergarten.</p>
5	<p>Prekindergarten, school readiness, preschool, and early education programs; licensure requirement.</p> <p>Requires that a school district and charter school employ a licensed teacher to provide instruction in a preschool, school readiness, school readiness plus, prekindergarten, or other early education program in a school district or charter school. Provides that the requirement does not apply to individuals providing instruction in licensed child care centers and certified, license-exempt child care centers.</p> <p>Provides that an individual who has taught in an early education program for at least five years prior to September 1, 2028, may continue to teach without obtaining a license. Provides that exempt individuals are teachers for purposes of PELRA, which determines which individuals can be in the teacher bargaining unit.</p> <p>Makes the section effective July 1, 2028.</p>
6	<p>Grants for Grow Your Own early childhood and family educator programs.</p> <p>Establishes a Grow Your Own early childhood educator grant program that allows licensed child care programs and other programs or organizations to apply for a grant to host, build, or expand an early childhood educator preparation program that leads to a credential or degree needed to enter or advance in the early childhood education workforce. Establishes a “Grow Your Own Early Childhood Education program account” in the special revenue fund. Appropriates up to \$175,000 annually to the commissioner to administer and monitor the program. Requires grant recipients to report to the commissioner on their activities and requires the commissioner to publish a report for the public summarizing the activities and outcomes of grant recipients.</p>
7	<p>Support staff. [ECFE]</p> <p>Directs the Department of Education to employ two full-time equivalent staff to provide operational support and guidance to ECFE programs. Requires that each staff person hold a valid license as a teacher of parent and family education.</p>

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8	<p>Additional duties.</p> <p>Strikes two requirements to produce recommendations that the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care has fulfilled. Requires that the council review and provide input on the work produced by the Great Start for All Minnesota Children Task Force.</p>
9	<p>System components. [Parent Aware]</p> <p>Provides an automatic one-star rating under Parent Aware to licensed child care centers and licensed family child care providers, provided the licensed programs do not opt out of the rating system and are in good standing. Directs the commissioner of human services to establish, by July 1, 2026, a process under which a licensed program may opt out of the automatic one-star rating. Directs the commissioner to consult with Tribes to develop a process for rating Tribally licensed programs that is consistent with the goals of the automatic one-star rating.</p>
10	<p>Kindergarten entry assessment.</p> <p>Directs the commissioner of education to implement a kindergarten entry assessment of incoming kindergarteners. Directs school districts and charter schools to choose a kindergarten entry assessment tool approved by the Department of Education that meets specified requirements. Requires the department to provide assessment-related technical assistance and professional development to educators, school districts, and charter schools. Requires that school districts and charter schools annually report the results of the kindergarten entry assessment to the department and directs the commissioner to publicly report the results in the manner specified. Provides a three-year phase-in of the requirements under this section, with all school districts and charter schools complying beginning with the 2025-2026 school year.</p>
11	<p>Family eligibility. [Early learning scholarships]</p> <p>Modifies financial eligibility for early learning scholarships as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ beginning July 1, 2024, family income must be equal to or less than 47 percent of the state median income; and▪ beginning July 1, 2025, family income must be equal to or less than 85 percent of state median income. <p>Beginning July 1, 2024, makes families that have a child who is referred as in need of child protective services or placed in foster care eligible for scholarships regardless of a family's income level.</p> <p>Beginning January 1, 2024, changes a child's eligibility for scholarships to include all children from birth through age four on September 1 of the current school year.</p>

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12	<p>Applications; priorities. [Early learning scholarships]</p> <p>Creates a new subdivision 2a. Adds priority groups for scholarships that go into effect July 1, 2024: children who have incarcerated parents, children with a parent in a substance use treatment program or a mental health treatment program, and children who have experienced domestic violence. Adds an additional priority group beginning January 1, 2025: children who are younger than four years old.</p> <p>Provides that beginning July 1, 2025, the Department of Education must give highest priority for scholarships to children in families with income less than or equal to 47 percent of state median income, and then prioritize children who meet the other specified criteria within the group.</p>
13	<p>Administration. [Early learning scholarships]</p> <p>Strikes language that is moved to the new subdivision 2a. Directs the commissioner of education to establish a schedule of tiered scholarship amounts based on specified factors. Provides that a scholarship cancels if a recipient has not enrolled in an eligible program within three months, rather than ten months, of receiving the scholarship. Allows extensions if a program is unavailable to a child within the three-month timeline.</p> <p>Makes the section effective July 1, 2024.</p>
14	<p>Early childhood program eligibility. [Early learning scholarships]</p> <p>Removes the requirement for programs to have three or four stars under Parent Aware to accept scholarships. The requirement would have gone into effect beginning July 1, 2024.</p>
15	<p>Early learning scholarship account.</p> <p>Allows the commissioner of education to use money from the early learning scholarship account in the special revenue fund as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ increases the amount the commissioner may use for costs associated with administering and monitoring scholarships, up to \$2,133,000 annually;▪ allows the commissioner to use money for family outreach and distribution of scholarships; and▪ provides that the commissioner may use up to \$5,000,000 to create information technology systems and, beginning July 1, 2025, \$750,000 annually to maintain the systems.
16	<p>School of parents' choice.</p> <p>Provides that a parent of a student with a disability who is not yet enrolled in kindergarten and not open enrolled in a nonresident district may elect a school in a</p>

Section	Description
	nonresident district where the child is enrolled in a Head Start program or a licensed child care program.
17	Direction to commissioner of human services; one-star rating report. Directs the commissioner of human services to engage with early care and learning providers to assess how the automatic one-star Parent Aware rating may impact whether providers choose to work toward higher Parent Aware ratings, and directs the commissioner to determine the cost of establishing the automatic one-star rating. Requires the commissioner to report to the legislature by December 31, 2024.
18	Appropriations given effect once. Provides that if an appropriation or transfer in this article is enacted more than once during the 2023 regular session, then the appropriation or transfer must take effect only once.
19	Appropriation; great start scholarships program. Makes a onetime appropriation of \$2,610,000 in fiscal year 2024 from the general fund to the commissioner of human services for establishing and implementing the great start scholarships program. Allows the commissioner to transfer part or all of the appropriation to the commissioner of children, youth, and families beginning July 1, 2024.
20	Appropriations; Department of Education. Appropriates money to the Department of Education for early learning programs.



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