

HOUSE RESEARCH

Bill Summary

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Overview

Establishes the Parent Aware quality rating system for early childhood education, Parent Aware regions, early childhood education scholarships, and appropriates money.

1 Definitions. Creates § 119C.01. Provides definitions of the terms "commissioner," "eligible program," "income," "Parent Aware," "Parent Aware Plus regions," "Parent Aware region," and "rated program." Makes this section effective the day following final enactment.

2 Parent Aware. Creates § 119C.02.

Subd. 1. Department of Education; request for proposal. Requires the Department of Education to develop a request for proposal for an organization to develop the Parent Aware quality improvement and rating system. Requires the commissioner to consult with the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation to design the request for proposal. Specifies eligible responder organizations. Specifies timelines for the request for proposal and contract. Specifies that the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation is not an eligible responder.

Subd. 2. Criteria; measure. Requires Parent Aware to use quality ratings shown to be linked to improving children's school readiness outcomes and requires program evaluation of certain minimum components.

Subd. 3. Rated programs. Requires the contract entity to submit a list of rated programs to the commissioner at least twice each year. Specifies that the list of rated programs serves as the commissioner's rating and the commissioner's decision is final.

Subd. 4. Evaluation. Requires the commissioner to contract with an independent private organization to evaluate the Parent Aware quality rating system if sufficient private funding is available. Specifies the information that must be included in the evaluation. Requires the commissioner to make available to the independent private organization any data requested by the organization consistent with government data practices and at no cost to the organization.

3 Selection process for Parent Aware regions. Creates § 119C.03.

Subd. 1. Designation of Parent Aware regions. Specifies that Parent Aware regions are the economic development regions as designated by the governor.

Subd. 2. Application process. Requires the commissioner to develop an application process to select new Parent Aware regions using specified criteria.

Subd. 3. Application preparation. Requires child care resource and referral organizations to prepare and submit the application for their region for approval to become a Parent Aware region in coordination with local partners.

Subd. 4. Region approval. Requires the commissioner to develop an application process by December 1, 2011. Specifies the timeline for applications and approval of regions.

Subd. 5. Parent Aware Plus regions; commissioner approval. Requires the commissioner to designate a Parent Aware region as a Parent Aware Plus region when there are a sufficient number of programs rated for each program type. Specifies the minimum criteria the commissioner must consider when designating Parent Aware Plus regions. Requires the commissioner to designate Hennepin County, the city of St. Paul, Blue Earth County, and Nicollet County as Parent Aware Plus regions beginning in fiscal year 2012 and allow those regions to continue using the existing model of the Parent Aware quality rating system in fiscal year 2012.

4 Early childhood education scholarships. Creates § 119C.04.

Subd. 1. Early childhood education scholarship locations. Requires the commissioner to make scholarships available in the Parent Aware Plus regions in fiscal year 2012 and later. Requires the commissioner to establish additional locations where early childhood education scholarships may be used to pay for services provided by rated programs in fiscal year 2013 and later. Requires the additional early childhood education scholarship locations to be located in Parent Aware Plus regions. Allows the commissioner to assign certain duties to approved Parent Aware Plus regions.

Subd. 2. Scholarship eligibility. Specifies the eligibility requirements of parents and children for the early childhood education scholarships.

Subd. 3. Eligibility determination. Requires the commissioner to develop a simple application process that families may use to apply for early childhood education scholarships.

Subd. 4. Scholarship value. Makes early childhood education scholarships equal to \$4,000 each year for each eligible child for fiscal year 2012 and later.

Subd. 5. Scholarship use. Specifies how and when families must use the early childhood education scholarships.

Subd. 6. Quality standard; transition. Specifies the programs that are eligible to receive early childhood education scholarships. Requires eligible programs to agree to accept early childhood education scholarships to pay for services.

Subd. 7. Redeeming a scholarship. Requires a rated program that has received an early childhood education scholarship on behalf of an eligible child to pay for services must remit the scholarship in a manner determined by the commissioner. Requires the commissioner to pay rated programs the value of the early childhood education scholarship within 30 days of receiving the scholarship from the program. Requires the commissioner to determine a method for paying rated programs if a parent or legal guardian has divided or reduced a scholarship.

Subd. 8. Earned income calculation. Prohibits scholarships paid to providers on behalf of

eligible parents from being counted as earned income for the purposes of MA, MinnesotaCare, MFIP, DWP, child care assistance, or Head Start programs. Prohibits scholarships paid to providers on behalf of eligible parents from being considered child care funds for the purposes of the child care assistance programs.

Makes this section effective the days following final enactment.

- 5 **Application and reporting requirements.** Amends § 124D.15, subd. 3a. Removes a reference to school readiness aid. Removes plan and reporting requirements. Makes this section effective for revenue in fiscal year 2012 and later.
- 6 **Programmatic streamlining.** Requires the commissioner of education, in consultation with the commissioner of human services, to report to the legislative committees with jurisdiction over early childhood education and child care on a framework for incorporating the existing state programs that provide access to early learning and care programming into a single scholarship program that funds access to high quality early learning and care programs for low-income children in Minnesota. Requires the report to identify barriers and impediments to applying federal child care assistance and Head Start program funds in the form of a scholarship. Requires the commissioner to take into consideration efforts for simplifying the application and management procedures for participating families and providers.
- 7 **Parent Aware duties.** Requires the commissioner of education to direct an unspecified amount of funds in fiscal years 2012 and 2013 for the purpose of implementing Parent Aware.
- 8 **School readiness report.** Requires the commissioner of education to annually report to the legislature by February 1 of each year on the outcomes and demographics of school readiness program participants.
- 9 **Appropriations.** Appropriates unspecified amounts in fiscal year 2012 and 2013 from the general fund for early childhood education scholarships. Specifies how the appropriations must be used. Requires the Department of Education to make scholarships available on a first-come, first-served basis if the appropriation is insufficient to provide scholarships to all eligible children.