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Subject: Requiring all early learning scholarships to be awarded directly to families

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Overview

A child who is three or four years old on September 1 of the current year and not yet enrolled in kindergarten is eligible for an early learning scholarship if the child's family income is equal to or less than 185 percent of the federal poverty level for that year. Certain children under the age of three are also eligible for a scholarship. The maximum scholarship amount is currently \$7,500 per child, and the number of scholarships is limited by the program's overall appropriation.

The Minnesota Department of Education has developed two pathways for scholarships. Pathway I scholarships are awarded directly to eligible families. Pathway II scholarships are awarded to qualifying four-star rated programs (school district early education programs, Head Start centers, and private programs such as child care centers and licensed family child care locations) on behalf of qualifying children. Currently, about half of the scholarship money is awarded directly to parents through the Pathway I option and the other half is awarded indirectly through the Pathway II option.

H.F. 1491 directs all the commissioner to award all early learning scholarships directly to qualifying families.

Section

- 1 Administration; early learning scholarships.** Requires the commissioner to award all early learning scholarships directly to qualifying families.