

File Number: H.F. 1958
Version: As Introduced

Date: March 8, 2017

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Subject: Early education programs

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Overview

This bill creates a new Office of Early Education and Development and codes a new chapter of law. The director of early education and development is required to develop early education program policies, align funding streams, manage data, and coordinate evaluation of early child care and education programs. The director will direct the commissioner of education on how to administer early education programs, and direct the commissioner of human services on how to administer the quality rating and improvement system (QRIS). The bill limits the amount of aid a child may receive in total from multiple programs.

Section

- 1 Definitions.** Defines the following terms:
 - ▶ “Commissioner” means the commissioner of administration.
 - ▶ “Department” means the Department of Administration.
 - ▶ “Director” means the director of early education and development.
 - ▶ “Early education programs” includes the school readiness program, voluntary prekindergarten program, early learning scholarship program, and Head Start program.
 - ▶ “Fund” means the early education access fund.
- 2 Policy and purpose.** The purpose of chapter 119C is to establish an office to coordinate early education and development programs and funding.

Section

3 Early education access fund. Establishes a fund to coordinate appropriations for early child care and education programs.

4 Director of early education and development.

Subd. 1. Appointment. Requires the governor to appoint the director of early education and development. Requires the commissioner to provide administrative services to the director.

Subd. 2. Qualifications. Establishes the qualifications of the director, who serves in the unclassified service for a term of four years, and may be removed for cause.

Subd. 3. Compensation. Requires the compensation of the director to be established in accordance with chapter 15A.

Subd. 4. Duties; powers. Establishes the duties of the director, including setting policy, coordinating programs, and serving as executive director of the Children's Cabinet. Authorizes the director to direct and control money, and enter into agreements with other state agencies.

Subd. 5. Coordination with other agencies. Requires the commissioner of education to administer early education programs as specified by the director. Requires the commissioner of human services to administer the QRIS as specified by the director.

5 Fund and program administration.

Subd. 1. Federal funds. Allows the director to apply for federal funds, and accept donations.

Subd. 2. Program requirements. Requires programs receiving aid or enrolling children in programs under chapter 119C to participate in the QRIS, which rates the quality of child care and early education programs. Requires a child to be enrolled at least 350 hours per year in an eligible program to generate aid.

Subd. 3. Aid limits. Limits the amount of aid a child may generate from a combination of programs to the 75th percentile of the market rate survey under section 119B.02. The limit on aid includes aid under the child care assistance program and federal Head Start aids. Allows the director to charge a fee on a sliding scale, and waive the aid limit for children facing extreme hardship or urgent need.

Subd. 4. Accountability. Requires a child enrolled in early education and development programs to receive a kindergarten readiness assessment.

Subd. 5. Program aid guarantee. Guarantees that a program that receives Head Start or school readiness funds in fiscal year 2017 will receive at least the same funding in fiscal year 2018 and later, unless the aid to a program would cause a child to receive aid over the limit in subdivision 3.

6 Early education resource hubs. Allows the director to establish education resource hubs throughout the state. Requires the director to contract with appropriate organizations to serve as resource hubs. The hubs must consult with program participant parents to develop strategies to support outreach to families, connection to resources, and program choice.

Section

- 7** **Report required.** Requires the commissioner of human services and director of early education and development to submit a report to the legislature making recommendations on integrating programs, aligning income eligibility requirements under different programs, reducing paperwork, increasing accountability and efficiency, and transferring responsibility for QRIS, early education and development programs administered by the Department of Education, Department of Human Services, and Department of Health.
- 8** **Appropriations.**
- Subd. 1. Early education access fund.** Appropriates funds from the general fund to the director of early education and development.
- Subd. 2. School readiness.** Appropriates \$33,683,000 in fiscal year 2018 and \$33,683,000 in fiscal year 2019 for school readiness.
- Subd. 3. Early learning scholarships.** Appropriates an unspecified amount of money for early learning scholarships for fiscal years 2018 and 2019; allows up to \$950,000 each year for program administration.
- Subd. 4. Head Start program.** Appropriates \$25,100,000 in fiscal year 2018 and \$25,100,000 in fiscal year 2019 for Head Start programs.
- Subd. 5. Quality rating and improvement system.** Appropriates \$1,750,000 in fiscal year 2018 and \$1,750,000 in fiscal year 2019 for QRIS and to increase supports to providers participating in QRIS. Allows the director of early education and development to transfer money to the commissioner of human services for the QRIS.
- Subd. 6. Administrative coordination.** Allows the director of early education and development to transfer money appropriated under this section to the Department of Education for payments on the director's behalf.
- 9** **Revisor's instruction.** Instructs the revisor to revise and codify programs transferred to the director of early education and development in chapter 119C.