

House File 623 - Introduced

HOUSE FILE 623

BY COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN
SERVICES

(SUCCESSOR TO HSB 145)

A BILL FOR

1 An Act relating to early childhood education and care, including
2 by modifying provisions related to the statewide preschool
3 program, the child development coordinating council, programs
4 for at-risk children, the responsibilities of the department
5 of education, the early childhood Iowa initiative, and the
6 state child care assistance program, and establishing the
7 child care continuum partnership grants pilot program within
8 the department of health and human services.

9 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF IOWA:

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DIVISION I

STATEWIDE PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

Section 1. Section 256C.1, subsection 1, Code 2025, is amended to read as follows:

1. *"Approved local program"* means a school district's program or community-based provider's program for four-year-old children approved by the department of education to provide ~~high-quality~~ high-quality preschool instruction.

Sec. 2. Section 256C.1, Code 2025, is amended by adding the following new subsection:

NEW SUBSECTION. 1A. *"Community-based provider approved to directly participate in the preschool program"* means a community-based provider that meets the community-based provider requirements under section 256C.3 and has been approved by the department to directly participate in the preschool program. *"Community-based provider approved to directly participate in the preschool program"* does not mean a community-based provider that partners with a school district's approved local program.

Sec. 3. Section 256C.3, subsection 1, paragraph b, Code 2025, is amended to read as follows:

b. If space and funding are available, including funding from another school district account or fund from which preschool program expenditures are authorized by law, a school district approved to participate in the preschool program or community-based provider approved to directly participate in the preschool program may enroll and pay the cost of attendance for a younger or older child in the preschool program; however, the child shall not be counted for state funding purposes.

Sec. 4. Section 256C.3, subsection 2, paragraph a, subparagraph (1), Code 2025, is amended to read as follows:

(1) The individual is either employed by or under contract with the school district, or with the community-based provider approved to directly participate in the preschool program, that is implementing the program.

Sec. 5. Section 256C.3, subsection 3, unnumbered paragraph 1,

1 Code 2025, is amended to read as follows:

2 The state board shall adopt rules to further define the
3 following preschool program requirements which shall be used
4 to determine whether or not a local program implemented by a
5 school district approved to implement the preschool program or
6 a community-based provider directly approved to implement the
7 preschool program qualifies as an approved local program:

8 Sec. 6. Section 256C.3, subsection 3, paragraph h, Code 2025,
9 is amended to read as follows:

10 h. Provision for ensuring that children receiving care from
11 other child care arrangements can participate in the preschool
12 program with minimal disruption due to transportation and
13 movement from one site to another. The children participating in
14 the preschool program may be transported by the school district
15 or community provider to activities associated with the program
16 along with other children.

17 Sec. 7. Section 256C.3, Code 2025, is amended by adding the
18 following new subsection:

19 NEW SUBSECTION. 4A. *Community-based provider*
20 *requirements.* The state board shall adopt rules to further
21 define the following requirements of community-based providers
22 approved to directly participate in the preschool program in
23 implementing the preschool program:

24 a. Methods of demonstrating readiness to implement
25 high-quality instruction in the local program shall be
26 identified.

27 b. A community-based provider shall participate in data
28 collection and performance measurement processes and reporting as
29 defined by rule.

30 c. Professional development for community-based provider
31 preschool teachers shall be addressed in the community-based
32 provider's professional development plan.

33 Sec. 8. Section 256C.3, subsection 5, paragraphs a, b, and d,
34 Code 2025, are amended to read as follows:

35 a. The department shall implement an application and

1 selection process for school district participation and
2 community-based provider participation in the preschool program
3 that includes but is not limited to the enrollment requirements
4 provided under section 256C.4.

5 b. The department shall track the progress of students
6 served by a school district preschool program or community-based
7 provider preschool program and the students' performance in
8 elementary and secondary education.

9 d. The state board, in collaboration with the department,
10 shall ensure that the administrative rules adopted to support
11 the preschool program emphasize that children's access to the
12 program is voluntary, that the preschool foundation aid provided
13 to a school district or a community-based provider is provided
14 based upon the enrollment of eligible students in the school
15 district's or community-based provider's local program regardless
16 of whether an eligible student is a resident of the school
17 district, and that agreements entered into by a school district
18 for the provision of programming in settings other than the
19 school district's facilities are between the school district and
20 the private provider.

21 Sec. 9. Section 256C.4, subsection 1, Code 2025, is amended
22 to read as follows:

23 1. General State funding for school district approved to
24 participate in the preschool program.

25 a. State funding provided under the preschool program to
26 school districts shall be based upon the enrollment of eligible
27 students in the preschool programming provided by a school
28 district approved to participate in the preschool program.

29 b. A school district approved to participate in the preschool
30 program may authorize expenditures for the district's preschool
31 programming from any of the revenue sources available to the
32 district from the sources listed in chapter 298A, provided
33 the expenditures are within the uses permitted for the revenue
34 source. In addition, the use of the revenue source for preschool
35 or prekindergarten programming must have been approved prior

1 to any expenditure from the revenue source for the district's
2 approved local program.

3 c. Funding provided under the preschool program is intended
4 to supplement, not supplant, existing public funding for
5 preschool programming.

6 d. Preschool foundation aid funding shall not be commingled
7 with the other state aid payments made under section 257.16
8 to a school district and shall be accounted for by the local
9 school district separately from the other state aid payments.
10 Preschool foundation aid payments made to school districts are
11 miscellaneous income for purposes of chapter 257. A school
12 district shall maintain a separate listing within its budget
13 for preschool foundation aid payments received and expenditures
14 made. A school district shall certify to the department of
15 education that preschool foundation aid funding received by the
16 school district was used to supplement, not supplant, moneys
17 otherwise received and used by the school district for preschool
18 programming.

19 e. Preschool foundation aid funding shall not be used for
20 the costs of constructing a facility in connection with an
21 approved local program. Preschool foundation aid funding may
22 be used by approved local programs and community providers
23 for any purpose determined by the board of directors of the
24 school district to meet standards for high-quality preschool
25 instruction and for purposes that directly or indirectly benefit
26 students enrolled in the approved local program, including
27 but not limited to professional development for preschool
28 teachers, instructional equipment and supplies, material and
29 equipment designed to develop pupils' large and small motor
30 skills, translation services, playground equipment and repair
31 costs, food and beverages used by children in the approved
32 local program, safety equipment, facility rental fees, and for
33 other direct costs that enhance the approved local program,
34 including by contracting with community partners for any such
35 services. Preschool foundation aid funding may be used by

1 approved local programs for the costs of transportation involving
2 children participating in the preschool program. The costs of
3 transporting other children associated with the preschool program
4 or transported as provided in section 256C.3, subsection 3,
5 paragraph "h", may be prorated by the school district. Preschool
6 foundation aid funding received by an approved local program that
7 remains unexpended and unobligated at the end of a fiscal year
8 beginning on or after July 1, 2017, shall be used to build the
9 approved local program's preschool program capacity in the next
10 succeeding fiscal year excluding that portion of such unexpended
11 and unobligated funding that the school district authorizes
12 for transfer for deposit in the school district's flexibility
13 account established under section 298A.2, subsection 2, if the
14 statutory requirements for the use of such funding are met. For
15 purposes of determining whether a school district has authority
16 to transfer preschool foundation aid funding for deposit in the
17 school district's flexibility account established under section
18 298A.2, subsection 2, the school district must have provided
19 preschool programming during the fiscal year for which funding
20 remains unexpended and unobligated to all eligible students for
21 whom a timely application for enrollment was submitted.

22 *f.* The receipt of funding by a school district for the
23 purposes of this chapter, the need for additional funding for
24 the purposes of this chapter, or the enrollment count of eligible
25 students under this chapter shall not be considered to be unusual
26 circumstances, create an unusual need for additional funds, or
27 qualify under any other circumstances that may be used by the
28 school budget review committee to grant supplemental aid to or
29 establish a modified supplemental amount for a school district
30 under section 257.31.

31 *g.* For the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2015, and each
32 succeeding fiscal year, of the amount of preschool foundation aid
33 received by a school district for a fiscal year in accordance
34 with section 257.16, not more than five percent may be used by
35 the school district for administering the district's approved

1 local program. Outreach activities and rent for facilities
2 not owned by the school district are permissive uses of the
3 administrative funds.

4 h. For the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2015, and each
5 succeeding fiscal year, of the amount of preschool foundation aid
6 received by a school district for a fiscal year in accordance
7 with section 257.16, not less than ninety-five percent of the
8 per pupil amount shall be passed through to a community-based
9 provider for each pupil enrolled in the district's approved local
10 program. For the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2015, and each
11 succeeding fiscal year, not more than ten percent of the amount
12 of preschool foundation aid passed through to a community-based
13 provider may be used by the community-based provider for
14 administrative costs. The costs of outreach activities and
15 rent for facilities not owned by the school district are
16 permissive administrative costs. The costs of transportation
17 involving children participating in the preschool program and
18 other children may be prorated.

19 Sec. 10. Section 256C.4, Code 2025, is amended by adding the
20 following new subsection:

21 NEW SUBSECTION. 1A. *State preschool funding for*
22 *community-based providers approved to directly participate in the*
23 *preschool program.*

24 a. State preschool funding shall not be used for the costs
25 of constructing a facility in connection with an approved local
26 program. Preschool foundation aid funding may be used by
27 community-based providers for any purpose determined by the
28 community-based provider to meet standards for high-quality
29 preschool instruction and for purposes that directly or
30 indirectly benefit students enrolled in the approved local
31 program, including but not limited to professional development
32 for preschool teachers, instructional equipment and supplies,
33 material and equipment designed to develop pupils' large and
34 small motor skills, translation services, playground equipment
35 and repair costs, food and beverages used by children in the

1 approved local program, safety equipment, facility rental fees,
2 and for other direct costs that enhance the approved local
3 program, including by contracting with other community partners
4 for any such services. State preschool funding may be used by
5 approved local programs for the costs of transportation involving
6 children participating in the preschool program. Preschool
7 foundation aid funding received by a community-based provider
8 approved to directly participate in the preschool program that
9 remains unexpended and unobligated at the end of a fiscal year
10 shall be used to build the community-based provider's capacity in
11 the next succeeding fiscal year.

12 b. For the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2025, and each
13 succeeding fiscal year, of the amount of state preschool funding
14 received by a community-based provider approved to directly
15 participate in the preschool program for a fiscal year, not more
16 than five percent may be used by the community-based provider for
17 administering the approved local program. Outreach activities
18 and rent for facilities not owned by the community-based provider
19 are permissive uses of the administrative funds.

20 Sec. 11. Section 256C.4, subsection 2, paragraph a, Code
21 2025, is amended to read as follows:

22 a. To be included as an eligible student in the enrollment
23 count of the preschool programming provided by a school
24 district approved to participate in the preschool program or
25 a community-based provider approved to directly participate in
26 the preschool program, a child must be four years of age by
27 September 15 in the base year and attending the school district's
28 or community-based provider's approved local program.

29 Sec. 12. Section 256C.5, subsection 1, paragraphs c and d,
30 Code 2025, are amended to read as follows:

31 c. "*Preschool budget enrollment*" means the figure that is
32 equal to fifty percent of the actual enrollment of eligible
33 students in the preschool programming provided by a school
34 district approved to participate in the preschool program or a
35 community-based provider approved to directly participate in the

1 preschool program on October 1 of the base year, or the first
2 Monday in October if October 1 falls on a Saturday or Sunday.

3 *d. "Preschool foundation aid" means the product of the*
4 *regular program state cost per pupil for the budget year*
5 *multiplied by the school district's preschool budget enrollment*
6 *or the community-based provider's preschool budget enrollment.*

7 Sec. 13. Section 256C.5, Code 2025, is amended by adding the
8 following new subsection:

9 NEW SUBSECTION. 2A. *Preschool foundation aid community-based*
10 *provider amount.* For the initial school year for which a
11 community-based provider approved to directly participate in
12 the preschool program receives that approval and implements
13 the preschool program, the preschool foundation aid payable
14 to the community-based provider is the product of the regular
15 program state cost per pupil for the school year multiplied
16 by fifty percent of the community-based provider's eligible
17 student enrollment on the date in the school year determined
18 by rule. For budget years subsequent to the initial year
19 for which a community-based provider approved to directly
20 participate in the preschool program receives that initial
21 approval and implements the preschool program, the preschool
22 foundation aid is the same as calculated pursuant to subsection
23 1. The funding for the preschool foundation aid payable to the
24 community-based provider shall be paid from the appropriation
25 made in section 257.16. Continuation of a community-based
26 provider's participation in the preschool program for a second
27 or subsequent budget year is subject to the approval of the
28 department based upon the community-based provider's compliance
29 with accountability provisions and the department's on-site
30 review of the community-based provider's implementation of the
31 preschool program.

32 Sec. 14. Section 256C.5, subsection 3, Code 2025, is amended
33 to read as follows:

34 3. *Aid payments.*

35 a. Preschool foundation aid shall be paid as part of the

1 state aid payments made to school districts in accordance with
2 section 257.16.

3 b. Preschool foundation aid paid directly to community-based
4 providers shall be paid to the community-based provider in
5 monthly installments beginning on September 15 of a budget year
6 and ending on or about June 15 of the budget year as determined
7 by the department of management, taking into consideration the
8 relative budget and cash position of the state resources.

9 Sec. 15. EMERGENCY RULES. The state board of education may
10 adopt emergency rules under section 17A.4, subsection 3, and
11 section 17A.5, subsection 2, paragraph "b", to implement the
12 provisions of this division of this Act and the rules shall
13 be effective immediately upon filing unless a later date is
14 specified in the rules. Any rules adopted in accordance with
15 this section shall also be published as a notice of intended
16 action as provided in section 17A.4.

17 DIVISION II

18 CHILD DEVELOPMENT COORDINATING COUNCIL AND PROGRAMS FOR AT-RISK
19 CHILDREN

20 Sec. 16. Section 256.9, subsection 28, Code 2025, is amended
21 to read as follows:

22 28. ~~Develop, in conjunction with the child development~~
23 ~~coordinating council or other similar agency, child-to-staff~~
24 ratio recommendations and standards for at-risk programs based on
25 national literature and test results and Iowa longitudinal test
26 results.

27 Sec. 17. Section 256.9, subsection 31, paragraph b, Code
28 2025, is amended to read as follows:

29 b. Standards and materials developed shall include
30 materials which employ developmentally appropriate practices and
31 incorporate substantial parental involvement. The materials and
32 standards shall include alternative teaching approaches including
33 collaborative teaching and alternative dispute resolution
34 training. ~~The department shall consult with the child~~
35 ~~development coordinating council, the department of health~~

1 ~~and human services, the state board of regents center for~~
2 ~~early developmental education, the area education agencies,~~
3 ~~the department of human development and family studies in the~~
4 ~~college of human sciences at Iowa state university of science~~
5 ~~and technology, the early childhood elementary division of the~~
6 ~~college of education at the university of Iowa, and the college~~
7 ~~of education at the university of northern Iowa, in developing~~
8 ~~these standards and materials.~~

9 Sec. 18. Section 256.163, subsection 1, paragraph d, Code
10 2025, is amended to read as follows:

11 d. Shared visions programs receiving grants from the child
12 ~~development coordinating council~~ department of education under
13 section 256A.3.

14 Sec. 19. Section 256A.3, Code 2025, is amended to read as
15 follows:

16 **256A.3 Duties of ~~council~~ the department of education.**

17 ~~The child development coordinating council~~ department of
18 education shall promote the provision of child development
19 services to at-risk three-year-old and four-year-old children,
20 and shall do all of the following:

21 1. Develop a definition of at-risk children for the purposes
22 of this chapter. The definition shall include income, family
23 structure, the child's level of development, and availability or
24 accessibility for the child of a head start or other child care
25 program as criteria.

26 2. ~~Establish minimum guidelines for comprehensive early child~~
27 ~~development services for at-risk three-year and four-year-old~~
28 ~~children. The guidelines shall reflect current research findings~~
29 ~~on the necessary components for cost-effective child development~~
30 ~~services.~~

31 3. ~~At least biennially, develop an inventory of child~~
32 ~~development services provided to at-risk three-year and~~
33 ~~four-year-old children in this state and identify the number of~~
34 ~~children receiving and not receiving these services, the types~~
35 ~~of programs under which the services are received, the degree~~

~~1 to which each program meets the council's minimum guidelines for
2 a comprehensive program, and the reasons children not receiving
3 the services are not being served. The council is not required
4 to conduct independent research in developing the inventory, but
5 shall determine information needs necessary to provide a more
6 complete inventory.~~

7 4. 2. Subject to the availability of funds appropriated
8 or otherwise available for the purpose of providing child
9 development services, award grants for programs that provide new
10 or additional child development services to at-risk children.

11 a. In awarding program grants to an agency or individual, the
12 ~~council~~ department of education shall consider the following:

13 (1) The quality of the staff and staff background in child
14 development services.

15 (2) The degree to which the program is or will be integrated
16 with existing community resources and has the support of the
17 local community.

18 (3) The ability of the program to provide for child care
19 in addition to child development services for families needing
20 full-day child care.

21 (4) A staff-to-children ratio ~~within the guidelines~~
22 ~~established under subsection 2, but~~ not less than one staff
23 member per eight children.

24 (5) The degree to which the program involves and works with
25 the parents, and includes home visits, instruction for parents
26 on parenting skills, on enhancement of skills in providing for
27 their children's learning and development, and the physical,
28 mental, and emotional development of children, and experiential
29 education.

30 (6) The manner in which health, medical, dental, and
31 nutrition services are incorporated into the program.

32 (7) The degree to which the program complements existing
33 programs and services for at-risk three-year-old and
34 four-year-old children available in the area, including other
35 child care services, services provided through the school

1 district, and services available through area education agencies.

2 ~~(8) The degree to which the program can be monitored and~~
3 ~~evaluated to determine its ability to meet its goals.~~

4 ~~(9)~~ (8) The provision of transportation or other auxiliary
5 services that may be necessary for families to participate in the
6 program.

7 ~~(10)~~ (9) The provision of staff training and development,
8 and staff compensation sufficient to assure continuity.

9 b. Program grants funded under this subsection may integrate
10 children not meeting at-risk criteria into the program and shall
11 establish a fee for participation in the program in the manner
12 provided in section 279.49, but grant funds shall not be used to
13 pay the costs for those children.

14 c. Programs awarded grants under this subsection shall meet
15 the national association for the education of young children
16 program standards and accreditation criteria, the Iowa quality
17 preschool program standards and criteria, or other approved
18 program standards as determined by the department of education.
19 Programs awarded grants prior to July 1, 2015, shall continue to
20 be evaluated and assessed based on eligibility and award criteria
21 established under rules adopted by the state board of education
22 pursuant to section 279.51 prior to June 30, 2015.

23 ~~5.~~ 3. Encourage the submission of grant requests from
24 all potential providers of ~~child development services~~ statewide
25 voluntary preschool programming and shall be flexible in
26 evaluating grants, recognizing that different types of programs
27 may be suitable for different locations in the state.

28 a. Requests for grants must contain a procedure for
29 evaluating the effectiveness of the program and accounting
30 procedures for monitoring the expenditure of grant moneys.

31 b. The ~~council~~ department of education shall seek to
32 use performance-based measures to evaluate programs. Not
33 more than five percent of any state funds appropriated for
34 child development purposes may be used for administration and
35 evaluation.

1 ~~6.~~ 4. Annually, submit recommendations to the governor
2 and the general assembly on the need for investment in child
3 development services in the state.

4 ~~7.~~ 5. Subject to a decision by the ~~council~~ department of
5 education to initiate the programs, develop criteria for and
6 award grants under section 279.51, subsection 2.

7 ~~8. Encourage the establishment of programs that will enhance~~
8 ~~the skills of parents in parenting and in providing for the~~
9 ~~learning and development of their children.~~

10 Sec. 20. Section 256A.4, subsection 2, paragraph g, Code
11 2025, is amended to read as follows:

12 g. Role modeling and mentoring techniques for families of
13 children who meet one or more of the criteria established for
14 the definition of at-risk children by the ~~child development~~
15 ~~coordinating council~~ department of education.

16 Sec. 21. Section 256A.5, subsection 2, Code 2025, is amended
17 by striking the subsection.

18 Sec. 22. Section 256C.3, subsection 3, paragraph e, Code
19 2025, is amended to read as follows:

20 e. Collaboration with participating families, early care
21 providers, and community partners including but not limited to
22 early childhood Iowa area boards, head start programs, shared
23 visions and other programs provided under the auspices of
24 the ~~child development coordinating council~~ department, licensed
25 child care centers, registered child development homes, area
26 education agencies, child care resource and referral services
27 provided under section 237A.26, early childhood special education
28 programs, services funded by Tit. I of the federal Elementary and
29 Secondary Education Act of 1965, and family support programs.

30 Sec. 23. Section 256C.3, subsection 4, paragraph a, Code
31 2025, is amended to read as follows:

32 a. Methods of demonstrating community readiness to implement
33 high-quality instruction in a local program shall be identified.
34 The potential provider shall submit a collaborative program
35 proposal that demonstrates the involvement of multiple community

1 stakeholders including but not limited to, and only as
2 applicable, parents, the school district, accredited nonpublic
3 schools and faith-based representatives, the area education
4 agency, the early childhood Iowa area board, representatives of
5 business, head start programs, shared visions and other programs
6 provided under the auspices of the ~~child development coordinating~~
7 ~~council~~ department, center-based and home-based providers of
8 child care services, human services, public health, and economic
9 development programs. The methods may include but are not
10 limited to a school district providing evidence of a public
11 hearing on the proposed programming and written documentation of
12 collaboration agreements between the school district, existing
13 community providers, and other community stakeholders addressing
14 operational procedures and other critical measures.

15 Sec. 24. Section 262.71, subsection 8, Code 2025, is amended
16 by striking the subsection.

17 Sec. 25. Section 273.2, subsection 6, unnumbered paragraph 1,
18 Code 2025, is amended to read as follows:

19 The area education agency board may provide for the following
20 programs and services to local school districts, and at
21 the request of local school districts to providers of child
22 development services who have received grants under chapter 256A
23 from the ~~child development coordinating council~~ department of
24 education, within the limits of funds available:

25 Sec. 26. Section 279.51, subsection 1, paragraphs b and d,
26 Code 2025, are amended to read as follows:

27 b. For the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2007, and for each
28 succeeding fiscal year, eight million five hundred thirty-six
29 thousand seven hundred forty dollars of the funds appropriated
30 shall be allocated to the ~~child development coordinating council~~
31 ~~established in chapter 256A~~ department of education for the
32 purposes set out in subsection 2, ~~of this section and section~~
33 256A.3, and to be used as grants to early childhood programs that
34 demonstrate the greatest need for programs for at-risk children
35 and the families of at-risk children.

1 d. Notwithstanding section 256A.3, subsection ~~5~~ 3, of the
2 amount appropriated in this subsection for the fiscal year
3 beginning July 1, 2007, and for each succeeding fiscal year, up
4 to two hundred eighty-two thousand six hundred dollars may be
5 used for administrative costs.

6 Sec. 27. Section 279.51, subsection 2, paragraph a,
7 unnumbered paragraph 1, Code 2025, is amended to read as follows:

8 Funds allocated under subsection 1, paragraph "b", shall be
9 used by the ~~child development coordinating council~~ department of
10 education for the following:

11 Sec. 28. Section 279.51, subsection 2, paragraph a,
12 subparagraphs (1) and (2), Code 2025, are amended to read as
13 follows:

14 (1) To continue funding for programs previously funded by
15 grants awarded under section 256A.3 and to provide additional
16 grants under section 256A.3. The ~~council~~ department shall seek
17 to provide grants on the basis of the location within the state
18 of children meeting at-risk definitions.

19 (2) At the discretion of the ~~child development coordinating~~
20 ~~council~~ department of education, award grants ~~for the following:~~

21 (a) ~~To~~ to school districts to establish programs for
22 three-year-old, and four-year-old, ~~and five-year-old~~ at-risk
23 children.

24 (b) ~~To provide grants to provide educational support services~~
25 ~~to parents of at-risk children age birth through three years.~~

26 Sec. 29. Section 279.51, subsection 2, paragraph b, Code
27 2025, is amended to read as follows:

28 b. A grantee under this subsection may direct the use of
29 moneys received to serve any qualifying child ranging in age from
30 three years old to ~~five~~ four years old, regardless of the age
31 of population indicated on the grant request in its initial year
32 of application. A grantee is encouraged to consider the degree
33 to which the program complements existing programs and services
34 for three-year-old, and four-year-old, ~~and five-year-old~~ at-risk
35 children available in the area, including other child care and

1 preschool services, services provided through a school district,
2 and services available through an area education agency.

3 Sec. 30. Section 279.51, subsection 3, Code 2025, is amended
4 by striking the subsection.

5 Sec. 31. REPEAL. Section 256A.2, Code 2025, is repealed.

6 DIVISION III

7 DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RESPONSIBILITIES

8 Sec. 32. Section 256.9, Code 2025, is amended by adding the
9 following new subsections:

10 NEW SUBSECTION. 69. a. Review and conduct research related
11 to the most effective evidence-based curricula, instructional
12 materials, and evidence-based or promising practices used in
13 prekindergarten programs and in preschools, which shall include
14 a review of the curricula and instructional materials used
15 by prekindergarten programs in this state, preschool programs
16 serving children with individualized education programs, and
17 preschool programs created in accordance with chapters 256A and
18 256C.

19 b. Develop and make available on the department's internet
20 site a list of the most effective evidence-based curricula,
21 instructional materials, and evidence-based or promising
22 practices for prekindergarten programs and preschools.

23 NEW SUBSECTION. 70. a. Develop a preschool accountability
24 system representing, at minimum, developmental and learning
25 outcomes and continuous implementation of high-quality program
26 standards for school districts offering a prekindergarten
27 program, accredited nonpublic schools offering a prekindergarten
28 program, prekindergarten and preschool programs serving children
29 with individualized education programs, and preschool programs
30 created in accordance with chapters 256A and 256C. The preschool
31 accountability system must utilize, at minimum, data from child
32 performance and growth measures described in section 279.60,
33 continuous improvement activities described in chapters 256A
34 and 256C, and other measures and activities defined by the
35 department.

1 b. Provide, in coordination with the department of health and
2 human services, an alignment of an outcomes-based accountability
3 system for school districts offering a prekindergarten program,
4 accredited nonpublic schools offering a prekindergarten program,
5 preschool programs serving children with individualized education
6 programs, and preschool programs created in accordance with
7 chapters 256A and 256C. The outcomes-based accountability system
8 shall take into account the voluntary quality rating system
9 established pursuant to section 237A.30.

10 NEW SUBSECTION. 71. a. Review and revise the state early
11 learning standards and standards related to preschool programs
12 serving children with individualized education programs and
13 preschool programs created in accordance with chapters 256A and
14 256C.

15 b. Provide professional development services to school
16 districts offering a prekindergarten program, accredited
17 nonpublic schools offering a prekindergarten program, preschool
18 programs serving children with individualized education programs,
19 and preschool programs created in accordance with chapters 256A
20 and 256C to assist such programs in implementing the revised
21 early learning standards, preschool assessments, high-quality
22 program standards, and standards related to preschool programs.

23 DIVISION IV

24 EARLY CHILDHOOD IOWA INITIATIVE

25 Sec. 33. Section 256I.1, subsection 4, Code 2025, is amended
26 to read as follows:

27 4. "*Early childhood Iowa area*" means a geographic area
28 designated by the department in accordance with this chapter.

29 Sec. 34. Section 256I.4, subsection 3, Code 2025, is amended
30 by striking the subsection.

31 Sec. 35. Section 256I.6, subsection 2, Code 2025, is amended
32 by striking the subsection and inserting in lieu thereof the
33 following:

34 2. By January 1, 2026, the department shall designate
35 early childhood Iowa areas in the same number and using the

1 same geographic boundaries as the behavioral health districts
2 designated by the department pursuant to section 225A.4, as
3 enacted by 2024 Iowa Acts, ch. 1161.

4 Sec. 36. Section 256I.6, subsections 3 and 4, Code 2025, are
5 amended by striking the subsections.

6 Sec. 37. Section 256I.9, subsection 4, paragraphs a, b, and
7 c, Code 2025, are amended to read as follows:

8 a. A school ready children grant shall be awarded to an area
9 board annually, as funding is available. Receipt of continued
10 funding is subject to submission of the required annual report
11 data and the state board's determination that the area board
12 is making progress, through the use of specific, quantifiable
13 performance measures and locally identified community-wide
14 indicators, toward achieving the desired results and other
15 results identified in the community plan. Each area board
16 shall participate in the ~~designation~~ process to measure the
17 ~~area's~~ area board's success. If the use of performance measures
18 and community-wide indicators does not show that an area board
19 has made progress toward achieving the results identified in
20 the community plan, the state board shall require a plan of
21 corrective action, provide technical assistance, withhold any
22 increase in funding, or withdraw grant funding.

23 b. The state board shall distribute school ready children
24 grant moneys to area boards with approved comprehensive community
25 plans based upon a determination of an ~~early childhood Iowa~~
26 ~~area's designation~~ the success of the area board.

27 c. An area board's ~~designation~~ success shall be determined
28 by evidence of successful collaboration among public and private
29 early care, education, health, and human services interests in
30 the area or a documented program design that supports a strong
31 likelihood of a successful collaboration between these interests.

32 Sec. 38. Section 256I.11, subsection 4, paragraph a, Code
33 2025, is amended to read as follows:

34 a. An early childhood programs grant account is created in
35 the fund under the authority of the director of the department.

1 Moneys credited to the account are appropriated to and shall be
2 distributed by the department in the form of grants to early
3 childhood Iowa areas that the department determines are eligible
4 pursuant to criteria established by the state board in accordance
5 with law. ~~The criteria shall include but are not limited to a~~
6 ~~requirement that an early childhood Iowa area must be designated~~
7 ~~by the state board in order to be eligible to receive an early~~
8 ~~childhood programs grant.~~

9

DIVISION V

10 CHILD CARE WORKFORCE — STATE CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE ELIGIBILITY

11 Sec. 39. NEW SECTION. **237A.13A State child care assistance**
12 **— child care workforce.**

13 1. Notwithstanding any provision of section 237A.13 to the
14 contrary, a child shall be eligible for the state child care
15 assistance program under section 237A.13 if a parent, guardian,
16 or custodian meets all of the following requirements, as
17 applicable:

18 a. The parent, guardian, or custodian is employed at a child
19 care facility or child care home that has an agreement with
20 the department to accept reimbursement from the state child care
21 assistance program.

22 b. The parent, guardian, or custodian works in a child care
23 facility or child care home an average minimum of thirty-two
24 hours per week during the month in a position with a primary duty
25 of providing child care directly to children, and is regularly
26 counted in the minimum child-to-staff ratio established by the
27 department by rule.

28 c. If the parent, guardian, or custodian is employed at
29 a child care home or a child development home, the parent,
30 guardian, or custodian does not provide child care to the parent,
31 guardian, or custodian's own child. A co-provider at a child
32 development home may qualify for state child care assistance if
33 the person meets all the requirements specified in this section
34 and by the department by rule.

35 d. The parent, guardian, or custodian is not a substitute or

1 an assistant at a child care home or a child development home.

2 e. Based on the department's evaluation of the parent,
3 guardian, or custodian's application for state child care
4 assistance, the department has determined the parent, guardian,
5 or custodian has a need for child care.

6 f. The parent, guardian, or custodian is not the owner of the
7 child care facility or child care home where the children are
8 enrolled.

9 2. A director, co-director, or other administrative staff
10 member of a child care facility may qualify for state child care
11 assistance pursuant to subsection 1 if such person is regularly
12 counted in the minimum child-to-staff ratio established by the
13 department by rule.

14 3. A person participating in the state child care assistance
15 program pursuant to eligibility established under this section
16 shall make copayments based on the person's household income for
17 services received from the program.

18 4. The department shall adopt rules pursuant to chapter 17A
19 to administer this section.

20 DIVISION VI

21 CHILD CARE CONTINUUM PARTNERSHIP GRANTS — PILOT PROGRAM

22 Sec. 40. CHILD CARE CONTINUUM PARTNERSHIP GRANTS — PILOT
23 PROGRAM. The department of health and human services, in
24 collaboration with early childhood Iowa area boards created
25 pursuant to section 256I.7 and the department of education,
26 shall create and administer a child care continuum partnership
27 grants pilot program. The pilot program shall award competitive
28 grants to partnerships between providers of statewide voluntary
29 preschool programming and child care centers licensed pursuant
30 to chapter 237A to provide full-day early childhood education
31 and care programming for participants in the statewide voluntary
32 preschool program created in accordance with chapter 256C. The
33 department of health and human services shall adopt rules
34 pursuant to chapter 17A to administer the child care continuum
35 partnership grants pilot program.

EXPLANATION

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The inclusion of this explanation does not constitute agreement with the explanation's substance by the members of the general assembly.

This bill relates to early childhood education and care, including by modifying provisions related to the statewide preschool program, the child development coordinating council, programs for at-risk children, the responsibilities of the department of education (DE), the early childhood Iowa initiative, and the state child care assistance program, and establishing the child care continuum partnership grants pilot program within the department of health and human services (HHS).

DIVISION I — STATEWIDE PRESCHOOL PROGRAM. Under current law, only school districts that meet certain requirements established by the state board of education are able to participate in the statewide preschool program for four-year-old children established pursuant to Code chapter 256C, although school districts may contract with community-based providers. The bill authorizes community-based providers to directly participate in the statewide preschool program for four-year-old children established pursuant to Code chapter 256C by applying with DE to implement a preschool program. The state board is required to adopt rules to further define the requirements of community-based providers implementing the preschool program.

Under current law, state funding provided under the statewide preschool program for four-year-old children is provided to school districts based upon the number of eligible students enrolled in the preschool programming provided by the school district. Also under current law, if the school district contracts with a community-based provider, state funding passes from the school district to the community-based provider. The bill allows a community-based provider approved to directly participate in the preschool program to be paid preschool foundation aid directly in the same manner as a school district. The bill establishes the amount of preschool foundation aid that is payable to such a community-based provider for the initial

1 school year for which the community-based provider is approved to
2 directly participate in the preschool program, and for subsequent
3 school years.

4 The bill makes conforming changes.

5 DIVISION II — CHILD DEVELOPMENT COORDINATING COUNCIL
6 AND PROGRAMS FOR AT-RISK CHILDREN. Current Code chapter 256A
7 establishes the child development coordinating council to
8 promote the provision of child development services to at-risk
9 three-year-old and four-year-old children. The bill strikes
10 transfers all of the responsibilities of the child development
11 coordinating council to DE and makes conforming changes.
12 Current law requires the child development coordinating council
13 to establish minimum guidelines for comprehensive early child
14 development services for at-risk three-year-old and four-year-old
15 children. Current law also requires the child development
16 coordinating council to develop an inventory of child development
17 services provided to at-risk three-year-old and four-year-old
18 children in this state that identifies the number of children
19 who are not receiving these services. Additionally, current law
20 requires the child development coordinating council to encourage
21 the establishment of programs that will enhance the skills of
22 parents in parenting and in providing for the learning and
23 development of their children. Also, current law requires the
24 child development coordinating council to develop a resource
25 directory of parent involvement programs to assist districts
26 in planning family support programs. The bill strikes these
27 provisions and does not transfer these responsibilities to DE.

28 Current law requires the director of the department of
29 education to develop standards and instructional materials to
30 assist school districts in development of appropriate before
31 and after school programs for elementary school children,
32 child care services and programs to complement half-day and
33 all-day kindergarten programs, curricula for all-day kindergarten
34 programs, and curricula for the early elementary grades one
35 through three. Current law also requires the director to assist

1 prekindergarten instructors in the development of appropriate
2 curricula and teaching practices. In developing these standards
3 and materials, current law requires the director to consult with
4 the child development coordinating council, the department of
5 health and human services, the state board of regents center
6 for early developmental education, the area education agencies,
7 the department of human development and family studies in the
8 college of human sciences at Iowa state university of science
9 and technology, the early childhood elementary division of the
10 college of education at the university of Iowa, and the college
11 of education at the university of northern Iowa. The bill
12 strikes the provision related to persons the director is required
13 to consult with in developing these standards and materials.

14 Current Code section 279.51(1)(b) provides that for the
15 fiscal year beginning July 1, 2007, and for each succeeding
16 fiscal year, \$8,536,740 of the funds appropriated from the
17 general fund of the state to DE under Code section 279.51(1)
18 (programs for at-risk children) shall be allocated to the
19 child development coordinating council for the purposes set
20 out in Code section 279.51(2) and Code section 256A.3 (duties
21 of child development coordinating council). The bill modifies
22 Code section 279.51(1)(b) to provide that the moneys shall be
23 allocated to DE for purposes set out in Code section 279.51(2),
24 Code section 256A.3, as modified in the bill, and to be used as
25 grants to early childhood programs that demonstrate the greatest
26 need for programs for at-risk children and the families of
27 at-risk children.

28 Under current law, the moneys allocated under Code section
29 279.51(1)(b) may be used by the child development coordinating
30 council to award grants to school districts to establish programs
31 for three-year-old, four-year-old, and five-year-old at-risk
32 children, and to provide grants to provide educational support
33 services to parents of at-risk children age birth through
34 three years. The bill modifies Code section 279.51(1)(b) to
35 provide that such moneys may be used by DE to award grants to

1 school districts to establish programs for three-year-old and
2 four-year-old at-risk children.

3 Current law requires DE to seek assistance from foundations
4 and public and private agencies in the evaluation of the programs
5 funded under Code section 279.51 (programs for at-risk children),
6 and in the provision of support to school districts in developing
7 and implementing the programs funded under Code section 279.51.
8 The bill strikes this provision.

9 DIVISION III — DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RESPONSIBILITIES. The
10 bill requires the director of DE to review and conduct
11 research related to the most effective evidence-based curricula,
12 instructional materials, and evidence-based or promising
13 practices used in prekindergarten programs and in preschools,
14 and make a list of the most effective evidence-based curricula,
15 instructional materials, and evidence-based or promising
16 practices for prekindergarten programs and preschools available
17 on the DE's internet site.

18 The bill requires the director of DE to develop a preschool
19 accountability system representing, at minimum, developmental and
20 learning outcomes and continuous implementation of high-quality
21 program standards for school districts offering a prekindergarten
22 program, accredited nonpublic schools offering a prekindergarten
23 program, prekindergarten and preschool programs serving children
24 with individualized education programs, and preschool programs
25 created in accordance with Code chapters 256A and 256C. The
26 director is also required to provide, in coordination with HHS,
27 an alignment of an outcomes-based accountability system for
28 school districts offering a prekindergarten program, accredited
29 nonpublic schools offering a prekindergarten program, preschool
30 programs serving children with individualized education programs,
31 and preschool programs created in accordance with Code chapters
32 256A and 256C.

33 The bill requires the director of DE to review and revise
34 the state early learning standards and standards related to
35 preschool programs serving children with individualized education

1 programs and preschool programs created in accordance with
2 Code chapters 256A and 256C. The bill also requires the
3 director of DE to provide professional development services to
4 assist such programs in implementing the revised early learning
5 standards, preschool assessments, high-quality program standards,
6 and standards related to preschool programs.

7 DIVISION IV — EARLY CHILDHOOD IOWA INITIATIVE. In general,
8 the early childhood Iowa program established under Code
9 chapter 256I within HHS provides leadership for facilitation,
10 communication, and coordination for the early childhood Iowa
11 initiative activities and funding and for improvement of the
12 early care, education, health, and human services systems.
13 Current law requires the early childhood Iowa state board
14 to approve the geographic boundaries for the early childhood
15 Iowa areas throughout the state and any changes in the
16 boundaries. The bill provides that, by January 1, 2026, HHS
17 shall designate early childhood Iowa areas in the same number
18 and using the same geographic boundaries as the behavioral health
19 districts designated by HHS pursuant to Code section 225A.4
20 (behavioral health service system — districts and administrative
21 organizations). The bill makes conforming changes.

22 DIVISION V — CHILD CARE WORKFORCE — STATE CHILD CARE
23 ASSISTANCE ELIGIBILITY. The bill provides that a child shall be
24 eligible for the state child care assistance program under Code
25 section 237A.13 if a parent, guardian, or custodian meets certain
26 specified requirements established in the bill. A director,
27 co-director, or other administrative staff member of a child
28 care facility may qualify for the state child care assistance
29 program if such person is regularly counted in the minimum
30 child-to-staff ratio established by HHS. The bill requires a
31 person participating in the state child care assistance program
32 pursuant to eligibility established under the bill's provisions
33 to make copayments based on the person's household income for
34 services received from the program.

35 DIVISION VI — CHILD CARE CONTINUUM PARTNERSHIP GRANTS —

1 PILOT PROGRAM. The bill requires HHS, in collaboration with early
2 childhood Iowa area boards and DE, to create and administer
3 a child care continuum partnership grants pilot program. The
4 pilot program shall award competitive grants to partnerships
5 between providers of statewide voluntary preschool programming
6 and licensed child care centers to provide full-day early
7 childhood education and care programming for participants in the
8 statewide voluntary preschool program.

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