

THE FLORIDA SENATE
2016 SUMMARY OF LEGISLATION PASSED
Committee on Education Pre-K - 12

CS/HB 7053 — Early Childhood Development

by Appropriations Committee; Education Committee; and Rep. O'Toole and others (CS/SB 7058
by Appropriations Committee and Education Pre-K – 12 Committee)

The bill revises the Early Steps program within the Department of Health (DOH) and revises provisions of the School Readiness program to align to federal requirements in the 2014 reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant.

The Early Steps program provides screening and early intervention services to parents with infants and toddlers who have or may have a developmental delay. Specifically, the bill:

- Expands the duties of the DOH clearinghouse for information on early intervention services for parents and providers of early intervention services.
- Provides goals for the Early Steps program, defines terms, and assigns duties to the DOH, as well as the local Early Steps offices.
- Establishes eligibility criteria for the program.
- Requires a statewide plan, performance standards, and an accountability report each year.
- Designates the Florida Interagency Coordinating Council for Infants and Toddlers as the state interagency coordination council as required under federal law.
- Provides procedures for the successful transition of children from the Early Steps program to the local school districts.
- Repeals outdated sections of the Florida Statutes relating to the Early Steps program.

The School Readiness program provides subsidies for child care services and early childhood education for children of low-income families; children in protective services who are at risk of abuse, neglect, or abandonment; and children with disabilities. Specifically, the bill revises current statutory provisions relating to the School Readiness program by:

- Increasing health and safety standards;
- Expanding requirements for employment history checks and child care personnel background screenings;
- Expanding availability of child care information, including inspection and monitoring reports;
- Expanding School Readiness provider standards to include preservice and inservice training requirements and appropriate group size and staff-to-child ratios; and
- Aligning child eligibility criteria to the federal requirements.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2016.

Vote: Senate 40-0; House 114-0