

SENATE STAFF ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

BILL: SB 422
 SPONSOR: Senator Garcia
 SUBJECT: Pre-K Early Intervention Program
 DATE: March 28, 2001 REVISED: 4/3/2001 _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Harkey</u>	<u>O'Farrell</u>	<u>ED</u>	<u>Fav/3 amendments</u>
2.	_____	_____	<u>CF</u>	_____
3.	_____	_____	<u>AED</u>	_____
4.	_____	_____	<u>AP</u>	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____	_____

I. Summary:

The bill amends s. 230.2305, F.S., to require an expansion of the prekindergarten early intervention program to provide access to all four-year-old children at no cost to their parents. The Florida Partnership for School Readiness must develop proposed legislation for the expansion and present it to the Legislature no later than November 1, 2001.

The bill appropriates to the Partnership an amount sufficient to carry out the requirements of the bill.

The bill takes effect upon becoming a law.

This bill amends s. 230.2305, Florida Statutes.

II. Present Situation:

Florida's public school prekindergarten program began in 1985 when the Legislature funded a pilot project for disadvantaged and/or limited English language preschool students in Dade County. The \$250,000 appropriation supported the establishment of prekindergarten programs in public housing projects at Larchmont Gardens and Liberty Square and also funded a joint legislative task force on preschool to recommend ways to address the future need for preschool education for disadvantaged students throughout the state. The initiative was prompted by recommendations in a Dade County Grand Jury report issued in July 1984 in the Circuit Court of the Eleventh Judicial Circuit that was entitled "*The High School Dropout and the Inner City School.*" The report said, "Programs must be enacted for the inner city which will impact upon three and four year olds. Kindergarten, it is sad to say, is too often too late."

After the pilot programs had been operating for one year, the 1986 Legislature created the Prekindergarten Early Intervention Program to serve 3 and 4-year-old children who were at risk of educational failure (chapter 86-261, L.O.F.). The grant program was administered by the Department of Education (DOE) and was optional for school districts. The 1989 Legislature transferred control of the program from the Department of Education (DOE) to school districts; limited the program to economically disadvantaged children, primarily 4-year-olds; required training for staff and principals; and established an allocation formula based on free-lunch program participation (chapter 89-101, L.O.F.).

The 1994 Legislature, required the program to offer the elements necessary to prepare children for school, including a developmentally appropriate educational program, in keeping with the first state education goal (Goal 1), readiness to start school (Chapter 94-209, L.O.F.)

In 1996, the "Work and Gain Economic Self-Sufficiency (WAGES) Act", revised the eligibility criteria to require 75 % of the participants to be four-year-old economically disadvantaged children whose parents work or participate in the WAGES program, thus eliminating the eligibility for children of non-working parents (chapter 96-175, L.O.F.). Publicly supported preschool programs, including prekindergarten, subsidized child care, teen parent programs, Head Start, Chapter I, and migrant programs, were required to use a simplified point of entry into the programs, share waiting lists, and maintain a count of eligible children, without duplication. The Departments of Education and Health and Rehabilitative Services were required to develop minimum performance standards for early education and care programs aimed at readiness for school and to provide a method for measuring school districts' and central agencies' progress in meeting the standards.

The requirements for minimum performance standards for prekindergarten and child care programs led to the production of a list of standards but not to a uniformity of program quality that would prepare children for success in school. In 1999, the Legislature passed the School Readiness Act, (s. 411.01, F.S.) and created the Florida Partnership for School Readiness, which is responsible for establishing "an integrated and quality seamless service delivery system for all publicly funded early education and child care programs operating in this state."

The school readiness system is governed locally by coalitions of 18-25 individuals, representing both the public and the private sector. The Partnership is responsible for determining the amount of school readiness funds a local school readiness coalition should receive and transferring the funds to each coalition that has a fully approved school readiness plan. A coalition's school readiness program will have available to it state, federal, local, and lottery funds including those for the Florida First Start Program, Even Start literacy programs, prekindergarten early intervention programs, Head Start programs, migrant prekindergarten programs, Title I programs, subsidized child care programs, and teen parent programs.

Section 411.01, F.S., requires each school readiness coalition's plan to include a sliding fee scale establishing a co-payment for parents based upon their ability to pay. The Partnership staff estimates that the average annual parent co-pay for a 180-day, six-hour-per-day program, would be \$288. For a full-day subsidized child care program 260 days per year, the average parent co-pay would be \$832. The Partnership estimates the total amount of parent co-payments for four-year-old children in school readiness programs to be \$16,721,080.

The School Readiness Estimating Conference, established in s. 216.136, F.S., estimates the need for school readiness programs. At the March 2, 2001, conference, the following totals were established for four-year-old children:

Total population, age 4	187,028
Children eligible & served	59,624

Children not served in publicly funded programs could be attending private programs for which their parents pay a fee, or they could be in the care of a family member or nanny.

If all four-year-old children could attend prekindergarten programs at no charge to their parents, the additional cost to the state and/or federal government would be \$424,413,880. That amount is determined as follows:

127,404 additional four-year-old children at a cost of \$3,200 each would cost \$407,692,800. The amount of the co-payments that would no longer be received by the state would be added to the cost in the amount of \$16,721,080, for a total of \$424,413,880.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill amends s. 230.2305, F.S., to require the Florida Partnership for School Readiness to develop legislation to expand the prekindergarten early intervention program to provide access to all four-year-old children at no cost to their parents. The Partnership must report its recommendations to the Legislature no later than November 1, 2001.

The bill appropriates to the Partnership an amount sufficient to carry out the requirements of the bill.

The bill takes effect upon becoming law.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Economic Impact and Fiscal Note:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

None. The Florida Partnership for School Readiness could develop proposed legislation using its current resources.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Amendments:

1 by Education:

Requires the Florida Partnership for School Readiness to make recommendations, rather than develop legislation.

2 by Education:

Requires recommendations for serving all at-risk 4-year-old children, rather than all 4-year-old children.

3 by Education:

Deletes a requirement for proposed legislation, and deletes an appropriation.