

By: Talarico

H.B. No. 62

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

1
2 relating to establishing an Office of Early Childhood to
3 coordinate, consolidate and integrate early childhood programs.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

5 SECTION 1. Chapter 1001, Health and Safety Code, is amended
6 by adding Subsection 1001.266 to read as follows:

7 Sec. 1001.266. OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD. (a) There is
8 hereby established an Office of Early Childhood ("the Office").
9 The Office is vested with all powers and duties transferred to it
10 under this law and such other powers and duties as may be authorized
11 by law. The Office shall be within the Department of Health and
12 Human Services for administrative and budget purposes.

13 (b) The Office of Early Childhood shall be headed by the
14 Director of Early Childhood who shall be appointed within three
15 months of the effective date of this Act by a committee composed of
16 designees for the Governor, the speaker of the house of
17 representatives, the president of the senate, the minority leader
18 of the house of representatives and the minority leader of the
19 senate; if the Committee cannot agree on an appointee, then the
20 Governor shall make the appointment.

21 (c) The primary duties of the Office of Early Childhood are
22 to coordinate and integrate child care, early childhood, and early
23 care and learning programs in Texas in order to administer programs
24 and funding as efficiently as possible. The Office's duties shall

1 include, but are not limited to:

2 (i) The delivery of services to young children and their
3 families to ensure optimal health, safety and learning for each
4 young child;

5 (ii) Developing and implementing an early childhood
6 information system. Such early childhood information system shall
7 facilitate and encourage the sharing of data between and among
8 early childhood service providers by tracking:

9 (1) the health, safety and school readiness of all young
10 children receiving early care and education services from any local
11 or regional board of education or school readiness program,

12 (2) the characteristics of the existing and potential
13 workforce serving such children, and

14 (3) the characteristics of such programs serving such
15 children;

16 (iii) Developing and reporting on the early childhood
17 accountability plan. Such plan shall:

18 (1) identify and define appropriate population indicators
19 and program and system performance measures of the health, safety
20 and readiness of children to enter kindergarten, and early school
21 success of children, and shall identify any new or improved data
22 required for such purposes; and

23 (2) include aggregate information on the characteristics of
24 children and programs tracked by the early childhood information
25 system established by subsection (c, ii) of this act;

26 (3) the characteristics of such programs serving such
27 children;

1 (iv) Implementing a communications strategy for outreach to
2 families, service providers and policymakers;

3 (v) Not later than 6 months from the effective date of this
4 act, beginning a state-wide longitudinal evaluation of the school
5 readiness program examining the educational progress of children
6 from prekindergarten programs through grade four;

7 (vi) Developing, coordinating and supporting public and
8 private partnerships to aid early childhood initiatives;

9 (vii) Developing and implementing a state-wide
10 developmentally appropriate kindergarten assessment tool that
11 measures a child's level of preparedness for kindergarten, but
12 shall not be used as a measurement tool for program accountability;

13 (viii) Creating a unified set of reporting requirements for
14 the purpose of collecting the data elements necessary to perform
15 quality assessments and longitudinal analysis;

16 (ix) Comparing and analyzing data collected pursuant to
17 reporting requirements created under subdivision (viii) of this
18 subsection with the data collected in state-wide public school
19 information systems to enable population-level analysis of
20 children and families and the impacts of supported programs;

21 (x) Continually monitoring and evaluating all early care
22 and education and child development programs and services, focusing
23 on program outcomes in satisfying the health, safety, developmental
24 and educational needs of all children, while retaining distinct
25 separation between quality improvement services and child day care
26 licensing services;

27 (xi) Coordinating home visitation services across programs

1 for young children;

2 (xii) Providing information and technical assistance to
3 persons seeking early care and education and child development
4 programs and services;

5 (xiii) Assisting state agencies and municipalities in
6 obtaining federal funding for early care and education and child
7 development programs and services, including to maximize federal
8 dollars coming into Texas for federally-funded meals, home
9 visiting, and other early childhood programs;

10 (xiv) Providing technical assistance to providers of early
11 care and education programs and services to obtain licensing and
12 improve program quality;

13 (xv) Establishing a quality rating and improvement system
14 that covers home-based, center-based and school-based early child
15 care and day care;

16 (xvi) Maintaining an accreditation facilitation initiative
17 to assist early childhood care and education and day care program
18 and service providers in achieving national standards and program
19 improvement;

20 (xvii) Managing early childhood care and education and day
21 care licensing to the extent such is under state jurisdiction;

22 (xviii) Ensuring a coordinated and comprehensive statewide
23 system of professional development for providers and staff of early
24 childhood care and education, child development, and day care
25 programs and services;

26 (xix) Developing early learning and development standards
27 to be used by early childhood care and education and day care

1 providers; and

2 (xx) Providing families with opportunities for choice in
3 services including quality child care and community-based
4 family-centered services;

5 (xxi) Integrating early childhood care and education and
6 special education services;

7 (xxii) Promoting universal access to early childhood care
8 and education; and

9 (xxiii) Performing any other activities that will assist in
10 the provision of early care and education and child development
11 programs and services.

12 (d) The Director of Early Childhood shall be responsible for
13 implementing the policies and directives of the Office of Early
14 Childhood. The director may seek and shall be entitled to receive
15 from other state agencies such assistance as may be required to
16 perform such director's duties pursuant to this subsection.

17 (i) The Director may appoint such officers, employees,
18 agents and consultants as he or she may deem necessary.

19 (ii) To the extent practicable, the Director shall appoint
20 the officers, employees, agents and consultants for the office of
21 early childhood, from among the existing officers and employees of
22 existing agencies and departments currently housing early
23 childhood programs, as supervision for those programs is moved into
24 the Office of Early Childhood.

25 SECTION 2. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives
26 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
27 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this

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1 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this

2 Act takes effect September 1, 2023.