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S.B. No. 23

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

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AN ACT

relating to subsidized child-care services and early childhood care and education program coordination.

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

Section 1. Section 29.1561, Education Code, is amended by adding Subsection (c) to read as follows:

(c) The commissioner by rule may establish a program to award grants to providers of early childhood care and education programs that, to the greatest extent practicable, provide coordinated services authorized under Section 29.158(c).

SECTION 2. Section 29.160, Education Code, is amended by amending Subsection (c) and adding Subsections (c-1) and (c-2) to read as follows:

(c) A school district, regional education service center, institution of higher education, local government, local workforce development board, or community organization may develop one or more coordination-of-resources demonstration projects under which government-funded child-care and early education services, including Head Start and Early Head Start, prekindergarten, and after-school child-care program services, child-care services provided by nonprofit or for-profit entities, and faith-based child-care programs, are operated in a coordinated and integrated manner. An entity that develops a proposed demonstration project under this subsection must obtain approval of the project from the

1 state agency or agencies with regulatory jurisdiction over the
2 subject matter involved in the project. Approval of a project under
3 this subsection must be made contingent on development of a
4 memorandum of understanding regarding the child-care and early
5 education coordination and integration that is:

6 (1) entered into by each entity participating in the
7 project;

8 (2) certified by the State Center for Early Childhood
9 Development as meeting any standards developed under Section
10 29.155(g); and

11 (3) consistent with the applicable provisions of this
12 section and applicable laws and regulations in a manner that at a
13 minimum maintains existing child-care and early education program
14 requirements and does not waive any existing health and safety
15 standards.

16 (c-1) The memorandum of understanding required under
17 Subsection (c) shall provide for:

18 (1) equal decision-making authority for entities
19 participating in the project;

20 (2) uniform eligibility criteria for the project to
21 the extent authorized by state and federal law;

22 (3) development of streamlined enrollment procedures
23 and simplified forms for children eligible for services under the
24 project;

25 (4) strategies for the colocation and management of
26 staff and for facilitation of effective communication among staff
27 members;

1 (5) alignment and coordination of program calendars;

2 (6) delineation of responsibilities for the provision
3 of instructional supplies and materials and food services;

4 (7) development and implementation of a system by
5 which eligible children are referred for services among the
6 participating entities in a manner that complies with applicable
7 laws and regulations;

8 (8) periodic meetings of the participating entities to
9 address concerns relating to the administration and operation of
10 the project; and

11 (9) periodic meetings of the participating entities to
12 address common standards for the professional development of
13 program staff and to create opportunities to ensure that local
14 communities have effective program staff.

15 (c-2) A demonstration project established under
16 Subsection (c) must include a program evaluation component that, in
17 addition to assessing child-care and early education outcomes for
18 young children, demonstrates:

19 (1) the extent to which program quality has been
20 enhanced;

21 (2) the extent to which the number of children being
22 served by full-day, full-year programs has increased;

23 (3) the extent to which professional development
24 training or activities engaged in by program staff has increased;
25 and

26 (4) that there has been no weakening of standards or
27 diminishment of services.

1 SECTION 3. Subchapter E, Chapter 29, Education Code, is
2 amended by adding Section 29.161 to read as follows:

3 Sec. 29.161. SCHOOL READINESS CERTIFICATION SYSTEM.

4 (a) The State Center for Early Childhood Development, in
5 conjunction with the P-16 Council established under Section 61.077,
6 shall develop and adopt a school readiness certification system for
7 use in certifying the effectiveness of prekindergarten programs,
8 Head Start and Early Head Start programs, government-subsidized
9 child-care programs provided by nonprofit or for-profit entities,
10 government-subsidized faith-based child-care programs, and other
11 government-subsidized child-care programs in preparing children
12 for kindergarten. The system shall be made available on a voluntary
13 basis to program providers seeking to obtain certification as
14 evidence of the quality of the program provided.

15 (b) In developing and adopting the system, the center shall
16 seek the active participation of all interested stakeholders,
17 including parents and program providers.

18 (c) The system must:

19 (1) be reflective of research in the field of early
20 childhood care and education;

21 (2) be well-grounded in the cognitive, social, and
22 emotional development of young children; and

23 (3) apply a common set of criteria to each program
24 provider seeking certification, regardless of the type of program
25 or source of program funding.

26 SECTION 4. Subsection (a), Section 61.077, Education Code,
27 as amended by Chapters 61, 818, and 820, Acts of the 78th

1 Legislature, Regular Session, 2003, is reenacted and amended to
2 read as follows:

3 (a) The P-16 Council shall advise the Texas Higher Education
4 Coordinating Board and the State Board of Education in coordinating
5 postsecondary career and technology activities, career and
6 technology teacher education programs offered or proposed to be
7 offered in the colleges and universities of this state, and other
8 relevant matters, including those listed in Section 61.076. The
9 council, in conjunction with the State Center for Early Childhood
10 Development, shall also develop and adopt a school readiness
11 certification system as required by Section 29.161.

12 SECTION 5. The State Center for Early Childhood Development
13 shall adopt the school readiness certification system required by
14 Section 29.161, Education Code, as added by this Act, not later than
15 September 1, 2006.

16 SECTION 6. This Act takes effect September 1, 2005.