

By: Talarico

H.B. No. 51

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

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

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

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

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

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

(c) The primary duties of the Office of Early Childhood are to coordinate and integrate child care, early childhood, and early care and learning programs in Texas in order to administer programs 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
3 their families to ensure optimal health, safety and learning for
4 each 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
10 all young children receiving early care and education services from
11 any local or regional board of education or school readiness
12 program,

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

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

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

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

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

1 (3) the characteristics of such programs serving
2 such children;

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

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

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

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

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

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

24 (x) Continually monitoring and evaluating all early
25 care and education and child development programs and services,
26 focusing on program outcomes in satisfying the health, safety,
27 developmental and educational needs of all children, while

1 retaining distinct separation between quality improvement services
2 and child day care licensing services;

3 (xi) Coordinating home visitation services across
4 programs for young children;

5 (xii) Providing information and technical assistance
6 to persons seeking early care and education and child development
7 programs and services;

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

13 (xiv) Providing technical assistance to providers of
14 early care and education programs and services to obtain licensing
15 and improve program quality;

16 (xv) Establishing a quality rating and improvement
17 system that covers home-based, center-based and school-based early
18 child care and day care;

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

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

25 (xviii) Ensuring a coordinated and comprehensive
26 statewide system of professional development for providers and
27 staff of early childhood care and education, child development, and

1 day care programs and services;

2 (xix) Developing early learning and development
3 standards to be used by early childhood care and education and day
4 care providers; and

5 (xx) Providing families with opportunities for choice
6 in services including quality child care and community-based
7 family-centered services;

8 (xxi) Integrating early childhood care and education
9 and special education services;

10 (xxii) Promoting universal access to early childhood
11 care and education; and

12 (xxiii) Performing any other activities that will
13 assist in the provision of early care and education and child
14 development programs and services.

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

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

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

1 SECTION 2. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives
2 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
3 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
4 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
5 Act takes effect September 1, 2021.