

# 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: CS/SB 422

SPONSOR: Committee on Children and Families and Senator Garcia

SUBJECT: Pre-K Early Intervention Program

DATE: April 19, 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>Dowds</u>	<u>Whiddon</u>	<u>CF</u>	<u>Favorable/CS</u>
3.	_____	_____	<u>AED</u>	_____
4.	_____	_____	<u>AP</u>	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____	_____

**I. Summary:**

CS/SB 422 amends s. 230.2305, F.S., to require the Florida Partnership for School Readiness to make recommendations to expand the prekindergarten early intervention program to provide access to all at-risk 4-year-old children using a sliding fee scale based on the family's income. The recommendations from the Florida Partnership for School Readiness are to be submitted by November 1, 2001 and are to include a plan to phase in the expansion.

The bill takes effect upon becoming a law.

This bill amends section 230.2305, of the 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 3 and 4 year olds. Kindergarten, it is sad to say, is too often too late."

After the pilot programs had been operating for 1 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 (ch. 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 (ch. 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 (ch. 94-209, L.O.F.)

In 1996, the “Work and Gain Economic Self-Sufficiency (WAGES) Act,” revised the eligibility criteria to require 75 percent of the participants to be 4-year-old economically disadvantaged children whose parents work or participate in the WAGES program, thus virtually eliminating the eligibility for children of non-working parents (ch. 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 Department of Education and the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services (now Department of Children and Family 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 sectors. 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, 6-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 4-year-old children in school readiness programs to be \$16,721,080.

Title I of the Amendments to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 2701) focuses on low-income disadvantaged children and is designed to assist schools in providing children with the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills to meet the state performance standards. Title I funds are used for school wide programs which serve all children in the school if at least 50 percent of the children in the school have family incomes below the federal poverty level. Schools with less than 50 percent of the children with family incomes below the federal poverty level can use Title I funds for targeted assistance for those children who are eligible for the program.

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 4-year-old children:

Total population, age 4:	187,028
Four year old children in families with incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty level:	79,900
Four year old children eligible and served:	59,624

For some of the 4-year old children, English is not their primary language which potentially increases the difficulty these children will experience upon entering school. An indication of the number of children for whom English is not the primary language can be gleaned from the students enrolled in Programs for Language Enriched Pupils, who are students enrolled in some program for English language enrichment. For the 2000-2001 school year, 27,847 kindergarten students were enrolled in these programs out of a total kindergarten population of 175,759.

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 low-income 4-year-old children could attend prekindergarten programs with a sliding fee scale applied based on the household income, the additional cost to the state and/or federal government would be approximately \$59,043,720 for full implementation. That amount is determined as follows:

20,276 low-income 4-year-old children at a cost of \$3,200 each would cost \$64,883,200.  
The average parent fee of \$288 paid for 20,276 children would generate \$5,839,480 and reduce the cost to \$59,043,720.

### **III. Effect of Proposed Changes:**

CS/SB 422 amends s. 230.2305, F.S., to require the Florida Partnership for School Readiness to make recommendations to expand the prekindergarten early intervention program to provide access to all at-risk 4-year-old children using a sliding fee scale based on the family's income. The Partnership is to develop a plan to phase in the expansion of the prekindergarten early intervention program which is to emphasize 4-year old children living in Title I zone neighborhoods and children for whom English is not the primary language. The bill stipulates

that participation in the program is at the parents' option. The Partnership must report its recommendations to the Legislature no later than November 1, 2001.

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:**

None.