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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2017

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A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- RHODE ISLAND EARLY CHILDHOOD INNOVATION  
ACT

Introduced By: Representatives McNamara, Diaz, Tobon, and Cunha

Date Introduced: February 15, 2017

Referred To: House Finance

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Title 16 of the General Laws entitled "EDUCATION" is hereby amended  
2 by adding thereto the following chapter:

3 CHAPTER 87.1

4 RHODE ISLAND EARLY CHILDHOOD INNOVATION ACT

5 **16-87.1-1. Short title.**

6 This chapter shall be known and may be cited as the "Rhode Island early childhood  
7 innovation act."

8 **16-87.1-2. Legislative findings.**

9 The general assembly finds as follows:

10 (1) The first three (3) years of life are a period of incredible growth in all areas of a  
11 child's development. Eighty percent (80%) of a child's brain development occurs in the first three  
12 (3) years of their life. A child's early relationships with parents and caregivers can promote  
13 healthy brain development, build social and emotional skills and support language and literacy  
14 development starting from birth.

15 (2) Children who come from families who are identified as "at risk", based on  
16 socioeconomic status, parent education level, and limited parent knowledge or experience, are  
17 significantly less likely to be proficient in reading and math than other students when they enter  
18 school, experiencing an education achievement gap (hereinafter referred to in this chapter as the

1 "achievement gap") which begins at birth and is often further exacerbated as children progress in  
2 their education.

3 (3) There is overwhelming evidence that the state could expect a very high return to the  
4 public by investing in high quality early childhood programming for all of our children.

5 (4) Early childhood investments targeted towards program development for  
6 disadvantaged children will help to promote both efficiency and educational equality for the  
7 children of our state.

8 (5) While recognizing the efforts that have been made through the "prekindergarten  
9 education act", chapter 87 of title 16, more effort can and should be expended to reach children at  
10 an even younger age.

11 (6) The general assembly seeks to develop a research-based model for children ages three  
12 (3) years of age and under that focuses on low-income and at-risk families to eliminate the  
13 achievement gap.

14 (7) The expansion of funding for programs that advance outcomes for children during the  
15 early years of life is critical to achieving the state's goal for grade level reading by the third grade.

16 **16-87.1-3. Innovation fund authorized.**

17 (a) The department of elementary and secondary education shall develop and establish an  
18 early childhood innovation fund. The purpose of programs supported by this fund will be to close  
19 the achievement gap that currently exists for at-risk children as they enter kindergarten. The  
20 general assembly will allocate four million dollars (\$4,000,000) a year to invest in high quality,  
21 evidence informed, early childhood models that expand upon the current landscape of birth to  
22 three (3) programs and to allow successful existing programs to serve more at-risk families.  
23 Recipients of funding may include nonprofit organizations, local governments, and local  
24 education authorities.

25 (b) The department shall create a competitive request for proposals process to allocate  
26 funding for the fiscal year no later than October 1 of each year. The request for proposals should  
27 fund only programs with evidence of model effectiveness and all recipients must include ongoing  
28 commitment, and plans for advanced evaluation of results. Priority should be given to those  
29 programs that seek to engage and support parents and caregivers as leaders in their child's  
30 education.

31 (c) As used herein, the term "at-risk families" means those who are identified as having  
32 one risk factor on the RI newborn health assessment.

33 (d) The department shall communicate its efforts through this fund with the home visiting  
34 program in the department of health to best ensure coordination of efforts across early childhood.

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**16-87.1-4. Reporting.**

On or before October 31, 2018, and annually thereafter by October 31, the Rhode Island department of elementary and secondary education shall report back to the general assembly and the governor on the status and progress of the pilot program authorized by this chapter.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- RHODE ISLAND EARLY CHILDHOOD INNOVATION  
ACT

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1           This act would establish the Rhode Island early childhood innovation fund for the  
2 purpose of supporting programs to close the achievement gap that currently exists for at-risk  
3 children as they enter kindergarten.

4           This act would take effect upon passage.

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