

2018 -- S 2817

=====
LC005023
=====

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2018

—————
A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION - THE RHODE ISLAND EARLY CHILDHOOD
INNOVATION ACT

Introduced By: Senator Maryellen Goodwin

Date Introduced: April 12, 2018

Referred To: Senate Finance

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Findings. The general assembly finds and declares as follows:

2 (1) The first three (3) years of life are a period of incredible growth in all areas of a
3 baby's development. A child's early relationships with parents and caregivers can promote healthy
4 brain development, build social and emotional skills, and support language and literacy
5 development starting from birth.

6 (2) Children who come from families who are identified as at-risk based on
7 socioeconomic status, parent education level, and limited parent knowledge or experience are
8 significantly less likely to be proficient in reading and math than other students when they enter
9 school, experiencing an education achievement gap (hereinafter referred to in chapter 87.1 of title
10 16 as the "achievement gap") which begins at birth, and is often further exacerbated as children
11 progress in their education.

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

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

18 (5) While recognizing the efforts that have been made through the "Rhode Island

1 Prekindergarten Education Act", chapter 87 of title 16, more effort can and should be expended to
2 reach children at an even younger age.

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

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

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

10 CHAPTER 87.1

11 RHODE ISLAND EARLY CHILDHOOD INNOVATION ACT

12 **16-87.1-1. Short title.**

13 This chapter shall be known and may be cited as the "Rhode Island Early Childhood
14 Innovation Act."

15 **16-87.1-2. Innovation fund created.**

16 (a) The Rhode Island department of human services shall establish an early childhood
17 innovation fund. The purpose of the programs supported by this fund will be to close the
18 achievement gap that currently exists for at-risk children as they enter kindergarten. The general
19 assembly shall annually appropriate one million dollars (\$1,000,000) a year from funds not
20 currently appropriated a year to invest in high quality, evidence informed, voluntary, early
21 childhood models that expand upon the current landscape of birth to three (3) programs, and to
22 allow successful existing programs to serve more at-risk families. Recipients of funding may
23 include nonprofit organizations, local governments, universities and local education authorities.

24 (b) The department of human services, working together with the department of
25 education, shall create a competitive request for proposals to allocate funding for the fiscal year
26 no later than October 1 of each year. The request for proposals should fund only programs with
27 evidence of model effectiveness, clear procedures for insuring program quality and an ongoing
28 commitment to, 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) For the purposes of this chapter, the term "at-risk families" means those who are
32 identified as having one risk 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.

1 Programs funded through this fund shall implement procedures for ensuring that families are
2 referred to other state-funded early childhood programs including, but not limited to, the
3 department of health evidence-based home visiting programs, from which they would benefit.
4 Programs with demonstrated experience linking families to additional resources may be given
5 priority in the funding competition.

6 **16-87.1-3. Annual reports.**

7 On or before October 31, 2019, and annually thereafter by October 31, the department of
8 human services shall report back to the general assembly and the governor on the status and
9 progress of the pilot program authorized by this chapter.

10 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon passage.

=====
LC005023
=====

EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION - THE RHODE ISLAND EARLY CHILDHOOD
INNOVATION ACT

- 1 This act would create an early childhood innovation fund which would fund programs to
- 2 attempt to accelerate the learning ability of at-risk children.
- 3 This act would take effect upon passage.

=====
LC005023
=====