

2019 -- S 0656

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2019

A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- THE RHODE ISLAND EARLY CHILDHOOD
INNOVATION ACT

Introduced By: Senators Goodwin, Ciccone, Quezada, Miller, and Metts

Date Introduced: March 21, 2019

Referred To: Senate Education

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. 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
4 healthy 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
4 three (3) years of age and under 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
8 grade.

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

11 CHAPTER 87.1

12 THE RHODE ISLAND EARLY CHILDHOOD INNOVATION ACT

13 **16-87.1-1. Short title.**

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

16 **16-87.1-2. Innovation Fund authorized.**

17 (a) The Rhode Island department of human services shall establish an early childhood
18 innovation fund. The purpose of programs supported by this fund will be to close the achievement
19 gap that currently exists for at-risk children as they enter kindergarten. The general assembly will
20 allocate one million dollars (\$1,000,000) a year to invest in high quality, evidence informed,
21 voluntary, early childhood models that expand upon the current landscape of birth to three (3)
22 programs and to allow successful existing programs to serve more at-risk families. Recipients of
23 funding may include nonprofit organizations, local governments, universities and local education
24 authorities.

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

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

34 (d) The department shall communicate its efforts through this fund with the home visiting

1 [program in the department of health to best ensure coordination of efforts across early childhood.](#)
2 [Programs funded through this fund will implement procedures for ensuring that families are](#)
3 [referred to other state funded early childhood programs \(eg. department of health evidence-based](#)
4 [home visiting programs\) from which they would benefit. Programs with demonstrated experience](#)
5 [linking families to additional resources should be given priority in the funding competition.](#)

6 **16-87.1-3. Reporting.**

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

10 SECTION 3. 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 -- THE RHODE ISLAND EARLY CHILDHOOD
INNOVATION ACT

1 This act would create the Rhode Island Early Childhood Innovation Act whereby the
2 department of human services shall establish a childhood innovation fund to create programs to
3 close the achievement gap that currently exists for at-risk children as they enter kindergarten.
4 This act would allow the general assembly to allocate one million dollars (\$1,000,000) a year to
5 invest in high quality, evidence informed, voluntary, early childhood models for children between
6 the ages of birth through three (3) years old, to allow successful existing programs to serve more
7 at-risk families.

8 This act would take effect upon passage.

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