

HB 1173/SB1254: Dental Therapy

Authorizes Medicaid to reimburse for dental services provided by certain mobile dental units; creates Council on Dental Therapy; specifies licensure requirements, services, limitations, & prohibitions relating to practice of dental therapy; requires DOH, in consultation with Board of Dentistry & AHCA, to submit reports to Legislature. (House, Now in Health & Human Services Committee, 02/06/2024) Senate, Introduced, 01/09/2024)

Bill Sponsors:

- Rep. Linda Chaney (R-Parts of Hillsborough and Pinellas)
- Sen. Jay Collins (R-Parts of Hillsborough)

HB 929/SB 916: School Readiness Program

Increases eligibility for School Readiness subsidies through the Early Learning Coalition (from 150% FPL to 55% SMI); increases the rates paid to centers, schools, and family child care homes providing early learning through the program (i.e. "reimbursement rates"). (House, on agenda for 2/21/2024, Laid on Table under Rule 7.18(a) Favorable With Committee Substitute filed; Senate, Now in Appropriations Committee on Education, 01/17/2024)

Bill sponsors:

- Rep. Dana Trabulsy (R-Port St. Lucie)
- Sen. Alexis Calatayud (R-Miami)

HB 635/SB 820: Child Care and Early Learning Providers

Creates an early learning tax credit so that employers who offer a subsidy to cover part of the child care costs for the children (or grandchildren) of their employees - or who create on-site child care - can be reimbursed for those costs. Also proposes several changes aimed at easing regulatory burdens on child care businesses, including: it simplifies the health and safety inspection process (defining only two classes of violations); allows for a 45-day provisional hire status for child care employees whose background checks take more than five days; institutes free online training to meet the minimum requirements to become a child care teacher; and expands the abbreviated inspection plan for licensed facilities that have not had more than three of the same Class 2 violations and meet other standards. Finally, expands current insurance and zoning protections for family child care homes to include large family child care homes, a provider type that did not exist when the current provision was signed into law. (House, on agenda 02/20/2024, Favorable With Committee Substitute; Senate, Committee Substitute for Committee Substitute. by Finance and Tax read 1st time, 02/13/2024)



Bill sponsors:

- Rep. Fiona McFarland (R-Sarasota)
- Sen. Erin Grall (R-Vero Beach)

HB 847/SB 1400: School Readiness Program

Focused on better serving children with special needs and supporting the educators who work with them. Changes the criteria for children with special needs to receive priority in the School Readiness program, and for the providers serving them to receive the special needs differential. The proposed change would mean that a child with an Individualized Family Support Plan (IFSP) would be eligible—not only those who have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). It would also expand funding for infants, toddlers, and school-age children in afterschool programs - not just 3- and 4-year-olds as the law allows today. Finally, the bill proposes that providers serving children with special needs undergo 10 hours of “inclusive early learning practices” training to receive the differential funds, with the intent to ensure teachers are equipped with extra skills to manage all children in the classroom. (House, Now in PreK-12 Appropriations Subcommittee, 01/25/2024; Senate Referred to Education Pre-K -12; Appropriations Committee on Education; Fiscal Policy, 01/10/2024)

Bill sponsors:

- Rep. Robin Bartleman (D-Broward)
- Sen. Shevrin D. Jones (D-Miami Dade)

HB 1353/SB 1026: Early Learning

Proposes a range of changes to the state’s VPK and School Readiness Programs to better support children, providers, and Early Learning Coalitions. Aligns qualifications for a lead instructor in a summer VPK program to match those required during the school year (i.e. a CDA or equivalent), meaning a larger group of providers might participate in that option. Codifies the importance of “executive function” as a critical developmental domain. Creates new rules for device use to limit one-child-to-a-device time, mandating devices only be used during VPK time for assessments. Finally, creates a summer bridge program for students who are struggling at the end of the VPK year to have an additional four hours a day of early literacy supports to help prepare them for kindergarten. (House, Favorable with Committee substitute by Education & Employment Committee, 02/21/2024 (final action); Senate, Committee Substitute for Committee Substitute by Appropriations Committee on Education read 1st time, 02/13/2024)

Bill sponsors:

- Rep. John Synder (R-Palm Beach)
- Sen. Erin Grall (R-Vero Beach)

HB 1267 | SB 7052: Economic Self-Sufficiency

Proposes a range of changes to public benefits programs across the state to better set up individuals and families for economic self-sufficiency—meaning by the time they reach the exit threshold for a benefit, their family income can support that burden. Related to child care, creates a new School Readiness Subsidy Program that covers families from 85% SMI (the exit of the existing School Readiness program) up to 100% SMI. (House, added to Third Reading Calendar 02/21/2024, Favorable With Committee Substitute, 01/24/2024; Senate, on Committee agenda-- Fiscal Policy, 02/22/24)

Bill sponsors:

- Rep. Adam Anderson (R-Tarpon Springs)
- General Bill by Children, Families, and Elder Affairs

