

2015 Regular Session

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 174

BY REPRESENTATIVE MORENO

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in consultation with stakeholders which include but are not limited to the Advisory Council on Early Care and Education, to identify sources of state and federal funds available in Louisiana for early childhood care and education, as well as additional potential funding sources used by other states for such purpose, and submit to the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education a written proposal of funding mechanisms and a corresponding strategy for implementation of the eighty million dollar funding model developed in response to House Concurrent Resolution No. 61 of the 2014 Regular Session of the Legislature.

WHEREAS, the legislature passed Act No. 3 of the 2012 Regular Session of the Legislature (Act 3), which requires the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) to create a comprehensive and integrated network through which to manage and oversee all programs funded through state or federal resources that provide early childhood care or educational services; and

WHEREAS, the legislature expressed its intent that a comprehensive and integrated delivery system for early childhood care and education be created to ensure that every child enters kindergarten healthy and ready to learn; and

WHEREAS, BESE, the state Department of Education, and the Department of Children and Family Services have worked diligently and collaboratively to implement the provisions of Act 3, including the integration of standards and expectations across publicly funded early childhood care and education programs and the support of regional pilot programs; and

WHEREAS, the implementation of Act 3 has appropriately focused on increasing the quality of care and education, preparing children for kindergarten, and honoring family choices; and

WHEREAS, it is imperative that all publicly funded early childhood care and education programs offer high quality care and education to families, providing a safe, nurturing environment for children and preparing all children for kindergarten; and

WHEREAS, the quality of care and education is determined, in large part, by the ability of early learning centers to employ capable individuals as caregivers and teachers; and

WHEREAS, publicly funded early childhood care and education programs in Louisiana are not currently funded equitably, contributing to the inability of some early learning centers and programs to meet the state's quality standards and its expectation that children will be ready for kindergarten; and

WHEREAS, fewer than thirty percent of at-risk children ages birth to four in Louisiana have access to a publicly funded early childhood care and education program; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana currently appropriates no state general fund money and no Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) money to early care and education services for children under age four; and

WHEREAS, the state should make every reasonable attempt to equitably fund family choices to the fullest extent possible and to offer high quality options as families select publicly funded early childhood care and education; and

WHEREAS, HCR No. 61 of the 2014 Regular Session of the Legislature requested BESE to develop a statewide model for the funding of and equitable distribution of public funds for quality early childhood care and education for Louisiana children, ages birth to five, whose families request such services, and to submit a written report relative to such model to the legislature prior to the 2015 Regular Session; in response to this Resolution, BESE developed a funding model that was presented to the legislature in a report to the House and Senate education committees (the report); and

WHEREAS, the report defined three major challenges in the implementation of Act 3, including upgrading quality as child care funding is too low to ensure adequate teaching, creating equity as the state investment in Pre-K is less than the state investment in

kindergarten, and increasing access as there are not enough Pre-K seats for all at-risk families who want one; and

WHEREAS, the report estimated the cost of addressing these challenges to be eighty million dollars; however, the report did not define specific funding mechanisms nor how this funding might be phased in; and

WHEREAS, there is an urgent need to address the early childhood care and education funding gaps in the state, as the full implementation of Act 3 is mandated to begin in the 2015-2016 school year, and only fifty-four percent of children in Louisiana who are entering kindergarten are considered ready for kindergarten.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in consultation with stakeholders, which include but are not limited to the Advisory Council on Early Care and Education, to identify funding sources of state and federal funds available in Louisiana to be used for early childhood care and education, as well as additional potential funding sources used by other states for such purpose, and submit a written report to the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that such report, which BESE shall submit to these committees by January 15, 2016, shall include a proposal of specific funding mechanisms and a corresponding strategy for implementation of the eighty million dollar funding model developed in response to House Concurrent Resolution No. 61 of the 2014 Regular Session of the Legislature.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a suitable copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the president of the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and the state superintendent of education.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE