

SENATE BILL NO. 581

BY SENATORS APPEL, ALARIO AND THOMPSON AND REPRESENTATIVES  
CARTER AND KLECKLEY

1 AN ACT

2 To enact Part X-A of Chapter 1 of Title 17 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, to be  
3 comprised of R.S. 17:407.21 through 407.25, relative to early childhood education;  
4 to provide for the creation of an early childhood care and education network; to  
5 provide for the purposes of such network and the duties and responsibilities of  
6 certain state agencies related thereto; to provide relative to early childhood education  
7 programs and standards; to provide for an accountability system for early childhood  
8 education programs; to provide relative to a quality rating system for certain day care  
9 centers; to provide for legislative findings and intent; and to provide for related  
10 matters.

11 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

12 Section 1. Part X-A of Chapter 1 of Title 17 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of  
13 1950, to be comprised of R.S. 17:407.21 through 407.25 is hereby enacted to read as  
14 follows:

15 **PART X-A. LOUISIANA EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

16 **§407.21. Short title**

17 **This Part shall be known and may be cited as the "Louisiana Early**  
18 **Childhood Education Act".**

19 **§407.22. Legislative findings and intent**

20 **A. The legislature finds and declares that:**

21 **(1) In order to significantly improve outcomes at all levels of the state's**  
22 **educational system, it is imperative that standards for, and expectations of, our**  
23 **early childhood programs be raised to levels that will promote kindergarten**  
24 **readiness and sustain lifelong learning and achievement.**

1           (2) Publicly-funded early childhood programs should prioritize  
2           kindergarten readiness and public monies should fund programs that excel at  
3           achieving high levels of kindergarten readiness, or progression towards  
4           kindergarten readiness, as applicable for the ages of children served.

5           (3) Parents who choose to send their children to publicly-funded early  
6           childhood programs should have clear and actionable information on the quality  
7           of the programs available.

8           (4) Providers of publicly-funded early childhood programs should be  
9           held accountable for the public monies they receive, but given the autonomy to  
10          implement an educational program that promotes and achieves kindergarten  
11          readiness without undue regulation.

12          (5) State entities involved in the oversight or provision of early childhood  
13          programs should collaborate, set standards of educational achievement for  
14          young children that align with standards established for children enrolled in  
15          grades kindergarten through twelve, and hold providers of publicly-funded  
16          early childhood programs accountable without imposing undue regulation on  
17          said programs.

18          (6) There are high quality early childhood programs in this state that can  
19          serve as a model for increasing standards of achievement and financial  
20          efficiency in publicly-funded early childhood programs.

21          (7) Publicly-funded early childhood programs receive a significant  
22          amount of public monies that can and should be maximized in pursuit of high  
23          quality early childhood programs that achieve high levels of kindergarten  
24          readiness or progression towards kindergarten readiness, as applicable for the  
25          ages of children served.

26          (8) Tax incentives created for the purpose of promoting high quality  
27          early childhood programs should be awarded based on kindergarten readiness,  
28          or progression towards kindergarten readiness, as applicable for the ages of  
29          children served.

30          (9) A fragmented system of standards, funding, and oversight of the

1 state's publicly-funded early childhood programs serves as a barrier to  
2 providing every child with the high quality services and programs which he  
3 deserves and to providing parents with the information needed to make an  
4 informed choice when selecting the programs that best fit the needs of their  
5 children.

6 B. It is the intent of the legislature that a comprehensive and integrated  
7 delivery system for early childhood care and education be created to ensure that  
8 every child enters kindergarten healthy and ready to learn.

9 §407.23. Early Childhood Care and Education Network; creation;  
10 components; duties and responsibilities

11 A. Not later than July 1, 2013, the State Board of Elementary and  
12 Secondary Education, hereinafter called the state board, shall create a  
13 comprehensive and integrated network through which to manage and oversee  
14 all programs funded through state or federal resources that provide early  
15 childhood care or educational services.

16 B. To facilitate the creation of this network, the state board shall:

17 (1) Establish a definition of kindergarten readiness aligned with state  
18 content standards for elementary and secondary schools.

19 (2) Establish performance targets for children under the age of three and  
20 academic standards for kindergarten readiness for three - and four-year old  
21 children to be used in publicly-funded early childhood education programs.

22 (3) Create a uniform assessment and accountability system for publicly-  
23 funded early childhood education programs that includes a letter grade  
24 indicative of student performance.

25 (4) Coordinate with the Department of Children and Family Services  
26 and the Department of Health and Hospitals to align the standards for the  
27 licensing of child care facilities, including the requirements for participation in  
28 the Louisiana Quality Start Child Care Rating System, with the standards  
29 established for early childhood education programs.

30 (5) Establish a timeline for the creation and implementation of the early

1 childhood care and education network that shall be fully implemented by the  
2 beginning of the 2015-2016 school year.

3 C.(1) In creating this network, the state board, through the state  
4 Department of Education, shall work cooperatively and collaboratively with the  
5 Department of Children and Family Services and the Department of Health and  
6 Hospitals to establish a seamless early childhood educational system that is  
7 coordinated and integrated across all programs and related state agencies,  
8 regardless of public funding source.

9 (2)(a) The state Department of Education shall submit the plans and  
10 recommendations formulated by the impacted agencies to Louisiana's Early  
11 Childhood Advisory Council, the Child Care Association of Louisiana, and the  
12 nonpublic school commission appointed by the state board pursuant to R.S.  
13 17:11 for review and comment.

14 (b) Each reviewing entity shall submit its comments and  
15 recommendations to the state Department of Education, which shall prepare a  
16 summary report to be submitted to the state board for its consideration not  
17 later than January 1, 2013.

18 (3) By not later than March 1, 2013, the state board shall submit a  
19 written report to each member of the legislature, the Senate Committee on  
20 Education secretary, and the House Committee on Education secretary on the  
21 status of development of the early childhood care and education network. Such  
22 report shall include but not be limited to any recommendations relative to  
23 changes in law or administrative policy needed to properly implement the  
24 network.

25 §407.24. Rules

26 The State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education shall  
27 promulgate rules and regulations in accordance with the Administrative  
28 Procedure Act to implement the provisions of this Part.

29 §407.25. Applicability; limitation

30 This Part shall not apply to early childhood programs that receive public

1           **funds solely for food and nutrition assistance.**

2           Section 2. This Act shall become effective upon signature by the governor or, if not  
3 signed by the governor, upon expiration of the time for bills to become law without signature  
4 by the governor, as provided by Article III, Section 18 of the Constitution of Louisiana. If  
5 vetoed by the governor and subsequently approved by the legislature, this Act shall become  
6 effective on the day following such approval.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF LOUISIANA

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_