

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2017

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A N A C T

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

Introduced By: Senators Goodwin, Jabour, Goldin, and Quezada

Date Introduced: April 12, 2017

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 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 as the
10 "achievement gap") which begins at birth and is often further exacerbated as children progress in
11 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 authorized.**

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

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

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

32 (d) The department shall communicate its efforts through this fund with the home visiting
33 program in the department of health to best ensure coordination of efforts across early childhood.
34 Programs funded through this fund will implement procedures for ensuring that families are

1 [referred to other state funded early childhood programs \(e.g. department of health evidence-based](#)
2 [home visiting programs\) from which they would benefit. Programs with demonstrated experience](#)
3 [linking families to additional resources should be given priority in the funding competition.](#)

4 **16-87.1-3. Reporting.**

5 [On or before October 31, 2018, and annually thereafter by October 31, the Rhode Island](#)
6 [department of elementary and secondary education shall report back to the general assembly and](#)
7 [the governor on the status and progress of the pilot program authorized by this chapter.](#)

8 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 establish an early childhood innovation fund to help close the
- 2 achievement gap for at-risk children as they enter kindergarten.
- 3 This act would take effect upon passage.

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