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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2022

A N A C T

RELATING TO HUMAN SERVICES -- EARLY LEARNING HUBS

Introduced By: Senators DiMario, Cano, Gallo, Lawson, Valverde, DiPalma, Miller,
Seveney, Coyne, and Burke

Date Introduced: March 15, 2022

Referred To: Senate Education

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Title 40 of the General Laws entitled "HUMAN SERVICES" is hereby
2 amended by adding thereto the following chapter:

3 CHAPTER 6.7

4 EARLY LEARNING HUBS

5 **40-6.7-1. Definitions.**

6 As used in this chapter:

7 (1) "Early learning hub" means any entity serving as an intermediary among partners to
8 coordinate support for early learning providers in the delivery of early childhood care and
9 education, as determined by rules adopted by the department of human services.

10 (2) "Early learning intermediary" means any Rhode Island-based entity with experience
11 and expertise in the design, implementation and/or evaluation of early childhood care and
12 education, who has the capacity and authority, as determined by the department of human services,
13 to coordinate programs, resources and services intended to support other early childhood care and
14 learning providers to offer, expand or improve service delivery to children and families in Rhode
15 Island.

16 (3) "Hub partners" may include, but are not limited to, early childhood care and education
17 providers, community-based service providers, the Rhode Island department of education, the
18 Rhode Island department of labor and training, cities or towns, school districts, community
19 colleges, public universities, private educational institutions, faith-based organizations, and tribes.

1 **40-6.7-2. Early learning hubs established.**

2 (a) The department of human services shall establish no more than five (5) early learning
3 hubs throughout the state, taking into consideration ease of access and the unique needs of the
4 geographic regions of the state, that shall be coordinated by early learning intermediaries identified
5 by the department.

6 (b) Led by early learning intermediaries, the early learning hubs, shall serve as one-stop
7 service centers to support early childhood care and education providers, and those looking to
8 become providers, to access resources, receive technical assistance, be licensed, meet research-
9 based quality standards and improve their quality rating based on the state's quality rating and
10 improvement system, recruit and retain qualified staff, and deliver high-quality early childhood
11 services.

12 (c) The department shall ensure that early learning hubs:

13 (i) Conduct outreach to early childhood care and education providers, including center-
14 based and family childcare providers, to assess the most critical needs facing providers in the
15 delivery of high-quality services to children and families;

16 (ii) Convene and coordinate hub partners for the purpose of coordinating resources and
17 services aimed at building capacity among early childhood care and education providers;

18 (iii) Reduce barriers facing prospective, new or existing early childhood care and education
19 providers in establishing, expanding or improving programs in the early childhood care and
20 learning system in Rhode Island;

21 (iv) Evaluate the impact of enhanced and streamlined services to providers through
22 measures defined by the department.

23 (d) The department of human services may promulgate rules and regulations to achieve the
24 purpose of this chapter.

25 **40-6.7-3. Proposals and requirements.**

26 (a) The department shall implement a process for requesting proposals from entities to
27 become early learning hubs. Proposals submitted under this subsection must comply with criteria
28 and requirements adopted by the department by rule, including:

29 (1) The entity will be able to coordinate early learning provider support services.

30 (2) The entity will ensure that the support services will be in alignment with, and further
31 the quality standards defined by the department of human services and department of elementary
32 and secondary education.

33 (3) The entity will be able to integrate efforts among education and workforce providers,
34 providers of health and human services and providers of other programs and services in the

1 community.

2 (4) The entity will use coordinated and transparent budgeting.

3 (5) The entity will operate in a fiscally sound manner.

4 (6) The entity must have or establish a community advisory body that:

5 (i) Has the authority to initiate audits, recommend the terms of a contract and provide
6 reports to the public and to the department on the outcomes of the provision of services.

7 (ii) Has hub partners selected through a transparent process and includes both public and
8 private entities, locally based parents and service recipients, social service providers, childcare
9 providers, and representatives of local governments from the service area.

10 (7) The entity will collaborate with established public or private agencies and/or
11 community-based organizations in the state whose missions align with the objectives of the early
12 learning hub and who have experience delivering essential services, such as professional
13 development, community outreach, workforce training or recruitment, or small business support.

14 (8) The entity will serve a community that is based on the population and service needs of
15 the community and will demonstrate the ability to improve results for children served by the
16 providers in the early learning hub's network.

17 (9) The entity will be able to raise and leverage significant funds from public and private
18 sources and to secure in-kind support to support early learning services coordinated by the entity
19 and operate in a fiscally sound manner.

20 (10) The entity may provide administrative support, such as, but not limited to, payroll,
21 inventory, or staffing support, to providers within the entity's early learning hub.

22 (11) The entity shall certify it compensates its workers with at least the state's minimum
23 hourly wage, as well as health benefits, or that its workforce is subject to a collective bargaining
24 agreement.

25 (12) The entity meets any other qualifications established by the department.

26 (d) The department may adopt by rule requirements that are in addition to the requirements
27 described in this section that an entity must meet to qualify as an early learning hub. When
28 developing the additional requirements, the department must use a statewide public process of
29 community engagement that is consistent with the requirements of the federal Head Start Act.

30 (e) When determining whether to designate an entity as an early learning hub, the
31 department shall balance the following factors:

32 (1) The entity's ability to engage the community and be involved in the community.

33 (2) The entity's ability to produce outcomes that benefit children.

34 (3) The entity's resourcefulness.

1 (4) The entity’s use, or proposed use, of evidence-based practices.

2 (5) The entity’s ability to support a mixed delivery early childcare system that includes
3 infant childcare and pre-kindergarten education.

4 (f) The department shall use appropriate and relevant metrics for the purpose of providing
5 funding to early learning hubs designated under this section. The metrics must:

6 (1) Focus on community readiness, high capacity development and progress toward
7 tracking provider-related outcomes, and to the extent possible, community-level family and child
8 outcomes, such as number of children served in high-quality programs within a community. All
9 family or child data used pursuant to this section shall be de-identified and aggregated; and

10 (2) Establish a baseline of information for the area to be served by the early learning hub,
11 including information about the inclusion of community partners in the governance structure of the
12 early learning hub, the availability of data on local programs and outcomes and the success in
13 leveraging private, nonprofit and other governmental resources for early learning.

14 (g) An entity designated as part of an early learning hub may not use more than fifteen
15 percent (15%) of the monies received by the entity from the department to pay administrative costs
16 of the entity.

17 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
A N A C T
RELATING TO HUMAN SERVICES -- EARLY LEARNING HUBS

1 This act would establish "early learning hubs" to serve as an intermediary among hub
2 partners in order to coordinate support for early learning providers in the delivery of early childhood
3 care and education.

4 This act would take effect upon passage.

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