

FULL COMMITTEE AMENDMENT

Amendment: D5

Representative **G.R. Smith** proposes the following amendment:

Department of Education

Amend

1.56. (SDE: Full-Day 4K) ~~Eligible students residing in a school district that met the poverty level for participation in the prior school year are eligible to participate in the South Carolina Early Reading Development and Education Program in the current school year.~~ Beginning with the current fiscal year, eligible students residing in any school district may participate in the South Carolina Early Reading Development and Education program (CERDEP) pending the availability of space and funding. Student eligibility as defined by Section 59-156-130 of the 1976 Code is an annual family income of one hundred eighty-five percent or less of the federal poverty guidelines as promulgated annually by the United States Department of Health and Human Services or a statement of Medicaid eligibility. Parents may choose to enroll their child in a private child care center or private school approved by the Office of First Steps or in a public school participating in the program and approved by the Department of Education. Both the Office of First Steps and the Department of Education shall collaborate with South Carolina Head Start State Collaboration Office to inform parents of all their options.

Private providers approved by the Office of First Steps to participate in CERDEP shall include independent schools, including those religious in nature, that have a full-day 4K program and meet the following qualifications. The independent school: (1) offers a general education to primary or secondary school students; (2) does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, or national origin; (3) is located in this State; (4) has an educational curriculum that includes courses set forth in the state's diploma requirements, graduation certificate requirements for special needs children, and where the students attending are administered national achievement or state standardized tests, or both, at progressive grade levels to determine student progress; (5) has school facilities that are subject to applicable federal, state, and local laws; (6) is a member in good standing of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the South Carolina Association of Christian Schools, the South Carolina Independent Schools Association, or Palmetto Association of Independent Schools; and (7) requires all teachers and aides to undergo

criminal background checks. The Office of First Steps shall approve eligible independent schools for participation in the program. The Office of First Steps shall also be the fiscal agent for these private providers, reimbursing the independent schools only for the instructional cost of eligible students enrolled in the full-day 4K program, which in the current fiscal year is \$4,800 per student enrolled. The Office of First Steps shall ensure that independent schools participating use a curriculum that prepares students to be ready for kindergarten as defined by the South Carolina Early Learning Standards and that independent schools assess the early literacy gains of students participating in CERDEP with either one of the state selected assessments or an early literacy assessment approved by the Office of First Steps.

Beginning with the current fiscal year, public schools and independent schools participating in CERDEP shall not be required to be approved, registered, or licensed by the Department of Social Services in order to participate in CERDEP.

Public and private providers shall be funded for instructional costs at a rate of ~~\$4,600~~ \$4,800 per student enrolled. Eligible students enrolling during the school year or withdrawing during the school year shall be funded on a pro rata basis determined by the length of their enrollment. Private child care providers transporting eligible children to and from school shall also be eligible for a reimbursement of ~~\$574~~ \$587 per eligible child transported. All providers who are reimbursed are required to retain records as required by their fiscal agent. New public school providers and child care providers participating for the first time in the current fiscal year and enrolling between one and six eligible children shall be eligible to receive up to \$1,000 per child in materials and equipment funding, with providers enrolling seven or more such children eligible for funding not to exceed \$10,000. Providers receiving equipment funding are expected to participate in the program and provide high-quality, center-based programs as defined herein for a minimum of three years. Failure to participate for three years will require the provider to return a portion of the equipment allocation at a level determined by the Department of Education and the Office of First Steps to School Readiness. Funding to providers is contingent upon receipt of data as requested by the Department of Education and the Office of First Steps. The Department of Education shall only provide funding for public school students whose complete records have been entered into PowerSchool based on the one hundred and thirty-five day student average daily membership. For the current fiscal year, providers may enroll pay-lunch children who score at or below the twenty-fifth national percentile on two of the three DIAL-3 subscales by July 1 if at least seventy-five percent of the total number of children eligible or the Child Early Reading Development and Education Program in a district or county are projected to be enrolled in that program, Head Start, or ABC Child Care Program as determined by the Department of Education and the Office of First Steps, Child Early Reading Development and Education Program. Providers may receive reimbursement for these children if funds are available.

Annually, the Department of Education is directed to audit the annual allocations to public providers to ensure that allocations are accurate and aligned to the appropriate pro rata per student allocation, materials, and equipment funding. In the event the department, during the audit process determines that the annual allocations of the prior fiscal year are not accurate, the department must adjust the allocations for the current fiscal year to account for the audit findings. The department must provide the results of the annual audit findings to the General Assembly no later than December first. Likewise, in the event the Office of First Steps determines that the annual allocations of the prior fiscal year to private providers are not accurate, the Office of First Steps must adjust the allocations for the current fiscal year to account for the findings.

Of the funds appropriated, \$300,000 shall be allocated to the Education Oversight Committee to conduct an annual evaluation of the South Carolina Child Development Education Pilot Program and to issue findings in a report to the General Assembly by January fifteenth of each year. To aid in this evaluation, the Education Oversight Committee shall determine the data necessary and both public and private providers are required to submit the necessary data as a condition of continued participation in and funding of the program. This data shall include developmentally appropriate measures of student progress. Additionally, the Department of Education shall issue a unique student identifier for each child receiving services from a private provider. The Department of Education shall be responsible for the collection and maintenance of data on the public state funded full day and half-day four-year-old kindergarten programs. The Office of First Steps to School Readiness shall be responsible for the collection and maintenance of data on the state funded programs provided through private providers. The Education Oversight Committee shall use this data and all other collected and maintained data necessary to conduct a research based review of the program's implementation and assessment of student success in the early elementary grades along with information, recommendations, and a timeline for how the state can increase the number of students served in high-quality programs.

For each school district that chooses not to participate in the full-day 4K program, the district shall receive the same amount of EIA funds as allocated in the prior fiscal year for the provision of a half-day 4K program from the funds appropriated to the Department of Education for CERDEP or from any funds carried forward from the prior fiscal year to CERDEP.

For the current fiscal year, with unexpended funds carried forward from the prior fiscal year, the Office of First Steps may expend these funds accordingly: (1) up to \$1,000,000 may be used to pilot a program to provide higher reimbursement rates to high-quality child care centers. The reimbursement rate for students enrolled by child care providers rated B or higher in the ABC Quality System operated by the Department of Social Services may be increased by up to 10% of the per-student base following guidelines developed by the Office of First Steps; (2) up to \$100,000 may be used to provide one-time supplemental, needs-based incentive grants in an amount not to exceed \$30,000 for newly created and/or newly approved private providers proposing to expand service to ten or more CERDEP eligible children in communities unable to enroll all of eligible students in a public, private, or Head Start setting during the prior fiscal year. These grants are designed to address building renovations, documented as necessary to bring proposed classrooms into compliance with licensing regulations, materials and staffing costs, and/or other obstacles currently preventing their participation in the program. The First Steps Board of Trustees shall develop and approve an application process that incorporates formal review and fiscal safeguards designed to ensure grant funds are used solely to address documented barriers to program participation. Providers receiving this one-time supplement shall be expected to participate in the program and provide high-quality, center-based programs as defined herein for a minimum of three years. Failure to participate for three years shall require the provider to return a portion of the supplemental allocation at a level determined by the Office of First Steps to School Readiness. First Steps shall submit a report detailing its process, expenditures and expanded enrollment to the Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee and the Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee by March 15; and (3) up to \$1,000,000 may be used to provide grants to public-private partnerships to address building renovations and designs necessary to get the building and classrooms into compliance with licensing regulations and other obstacles that prevent participation in CERDEP following guidelines developed by the Office of First Steps. Providers

participating in this pilot shall be expected to participate in the program and provide high-quality, center-based programs as defined herein for a minimum of three years. Failure to participate for three years shall require the provider to return a portion of the supplemental allocation at a level determined by the Office of First Steps.

If by August first, the Department of Education or the Office of First Steps determines that appropriations will exceed expenditures, available funds may be used to fund an extended program and to increase the length of the program to a maximum of eight and a half hours per day or two hundred and twenty days per year or to fund summer programs. If a district chooses to fund summer enrollment the program funding shall conform to the funding in this act for full year programs however it shall be reduced on a pro rata basis to conform with the length of the program. A summer program shall be no more than eight and a half hours per day and shall be not more than ten weeks in length. The per pupil allocation and classroom grant must conform with the appropriated amount contained in this Act and end of year adjustments shall be based on the one hundred and thirty-five-day student average daily membership or later student average daily membership for districts choosing to extend the program past one hundred and eighty days. Funds may also be used to provide professional development and quality evaluations of programs. No later than April first, the Department of Education and the Office of First Steps shall report to the Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee and the Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee on the expenditure of these funds to include the following information: the amount of money used and specific steps and measures taken to enhance the quality of the 4K program and the amount of money used for professional development as well as the types of professional development offered and the number of participants. The Office of First Steps is directed to determine if the provision of extended programs in private centers improves the ability of parents to enter the workforce or to pursue postsecondary training or industry credentials.

Funds may not be used to supplant existing local 4K investment.

