**A** **JOINT RESOLUTION**

TO CREATE A STUDY COMMITTEE TO EXAMINE THE AVAILABILITY OF HIGH‑QUALITY CHILDCARE IN THIS STATE AND RECOMMEND POLICIES TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF MORE WIDELY ACCESSIBLE HIGH‑QUALITY PROVIDERS THROUGHOUT THE STATE, TO PROVIDE FOR THE COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE, TO PROVIDE THE STUDY COMMITTEE SHALL MAKE CERTAIN RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY BEFORE JANUARY 1, 2022, AND TO PROVIDE STAFFING FOR THE COMMITTEE, AMONG OTHER THINGS.

Whereas, the General Assembly finds that the United States Chamber of Commerce Foundation reported in November 2020 that the availability of high‑quality childcare is a critical education and economic recovery issue; and

Whereas, the General Assembly finds that childcare is essential for working parents and important in the social, emotional, and educational development of young children; and

Whereas, the General Assembly finds that childcare is an essential industry for economic recovery; and

Whereas, the General Assembly finds that the majority of childcare in our country and in our State is provided by small businesses whose financial stability has been weakened by the pandemic; and

Whereas, the General Assembly finds that as a result of the detrimental financial impact of the COVID‑19 pandemic on small businesses that provide childcare, access to critical high‑quality childcare has been jeopardized, and measures must be taken to ensure high‑quality childcare is available to working families in this State. Now, therefore:

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. (A) There is created a study committee to examine the availability of high‑quality childcare in this State and recommend policies to support the development of more widely accessible high‑quality providers throughout the State.

(B)(1) The study committee must be led by the Department of Social Services and the Office of First Steps to School Readiness, in collaboration with the Department of Commerce and the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce.

(2) The study committee is composed of eleven members, consisting of:

(a) the Director of the Department of Social Services or his designee;

(b) the Executive Director of the Office of First Steps to School Readiness or his designee;

(c) the Secretary of Commerce or his designee;

(d) the Executive Director of the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce or his designee;

(e) one member of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House;

(f) one member of the House of Representatives appointed by the Chairman of the House Education and Public Works Committee;

(g) one member of the Senate appointed by the President of the Senate;

(h) one member of the Senate appointed by the Chairman of the Senate Education Committee; and

(i) three licensed childcare providers appointed by the Governor.

(3) In making appointments to the study committee, consideration should be given to ensure the inclusion of diverse racial, ethnic, and gender perspectives representing districts throughout the State.

(4) Vacancies in the study committee’s membership must be filled in the manner of original appointment.

(5) Members of the committee shall serve without per diem, mileage, or other compensation generally provided to members of boards and commissions.

(C) The Senate Education Committee and the House Education and Public Works Committee shall provide appropriate staffing for the study committee.

(D) The study committee shall provide a report with recommendations to the General Assembly before January 1, 2022. The study committee shall dissolve upon providing its report to the General Assembly or on January 1, 2022, whichever occurs first.

SECTION 2. This joint resolution takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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