

1 SB132
2 26326-5
3 By Senator Escott-Russell
4 RFD: Children, Youth Affairs, and Human Resources
5 First Read: 01-FEB-2000

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Enrolled, An Act,

To further provide for the Department of Children's Affairs; to expand the powers and duties of the Department of Children's Affairs to authorize the commissioner to gather and be a repository for information on services and benefits provided to Alabama's children; and to report to the Governor and Legislature recommendations for providing for a more effective and coordinated delivery of those children's services. To create the Office of School Readiness within the Department of Children's Affairs.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

Section 1. Sections 26-24-3 and 26-24-4 Code of Alabama 1975 are hereby amended to read as follows:

"§26-24-3.

"The duties of the commissioner shall include, but not be limited to, all of the following:

(1) Advising the Governor and the Legislature in matters relating to the coordination of services for children under the age of 19.

(2) Serving as a liaison between the Governor and state agencies providing programs or services for children.

(3) Educating and informing legislators and other elected officials about issues affecting children.

1 (4) Coordinating local effort by creating a network
2 of existing local and community groups and advocates dedicated
3 to children to enable beneficial organizations throughout the
4 state to assist and educate each other.

5 (5) Actively seeking and applying for federal and
6 private grants to fund children's programs.

7 (6) Establishing a repository for information on
8 programs other than education programs offered by the
9 Department of Education for K-12 in Alabama, which offer
10 services for, or are for the benefit of, or in any way affect
11 Alabama's children, including but not limited to the
12 Department of Human Resources, the Department of Mental Health
13 and Mental Retardation, Rehabilitation Services, the
14 Department of Public Health, the Department of Youth Services,
15 the Children's Trust Fund, the Alabama Department of Economic
16 and Community Affairs, the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board,
17 the Department of Public Safety, and the Child Abuse and
18 Neglect Prevention Board.

19 (7) Preparing and submitting to the Governor and the
20 Legislature annual reports on activities and expenditures of
21 state and local agencies related to children; all state, local
22 and federal funding available for children's programs other
23 than education programs offered by the Department of Education
24 for K-12; and recommendations of proposed legislation on the
25 most efficient utilization of resources available in order to
26 maximize services provided to children.

1 (8) Preparing or causing to be prepared, and
2 submitting for approval and adoption by the Children's Policy
3 Council, legislation required to meet the unmet needs of
4 children by further development and improvement of children
5 services.

6 (9) Review the budget requests for children's
7 services of any state agency that administers children's
8 programs other than education programs offered by the
9 Department of Education for K-12."

10 "§26-24-4.

11 (a) All functions and duties of the department shall
12 be exercised by the commissioner acting alone or by and
13 through any administrative division or officer or employee
14 that the commissioner may designate. The commissioner shall
15 have all power and authority necessary or convenient to carry
16 out the functions and duties of the department.

17 (b) The commissioner may request any state or local
18 agency or department, which administers programs other than
19 education programs offered by the Department of Education for
20 K-12 that directly affect Alabama's children to submit to the
21 commissioner information deemed necessary by the commissioner
22 to evaluate and assess the relationship between children's
23 programs and the effectiveness of those programs other than
24 education programs offered by the Department of Education for
25 K-12.

1 (c) The commissioner may establish a data base of
2 services offered by the several state and local agencies, and
3 develop a system to provide for better coordination of
4 services.

5 (d) The commissioner shall work with the state and
6 county children's policy councils and the state and county
7 children's services facilitation teams in order to ensure that
8 a comprehensive coordinated effort is in place to provide for
9 children's services."

10 Section 2. The Office of School Readiness is created
11 within the Department of Children's Affairs. The office shall
12 have the duties, responsibilities, functions, powers, and
13 authority set forth in this act and as otherwise provided by
14 law.

15 Section 3. As used in this act, the following terms
16 shall have the following meanings:

17 (1) DIRECTOR. The Director of the Office of School
18 Readiness.

19 (2) OFFICE. The Office of School Readiness.

20 Section 4. (a) The chief administrative and
21 executive officer of the office shall be the director, who
22 shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the
23 Governor. The director shall be responsible for the
24 performance and exercise of the duties, responsibilities,
25 functions, powers, and authority imposed upon the director and
26 the office by law. The director shall be in the unclassified

1 service of the State Merit System and shall receive a salary
2 in an amount to be determined by the Governor. The director
3 shall employ an assistant who shall also serve in the
4 unclassified position of the State Merit System.

5 (b) The director shall employ all personnel of the
6 office, subject to the State Merit System.

7 Section 5. The Office of School Readiness shall do
8 all of the following:

9 (1) Establish criteria and administer such programs
10 and services as may be necessary for the operation and
11 management of a voluntary pre-kindergarten program.

12 (2) Administer such programs and services as may be
13 necessary for the operation and management of preschool and
14 certain child development programs coordinating with the
15 Department of Education for the inclusion of preschool special
16 education.

17 (3) Ensure that the pre-kindergarten program
18 provides a developmentally appropriate preschool program
19 emphasizing growth in language and literacy, math concepts,
20 science, arts, physical development, and personal and social
21 competence.

22 (4) Receive and disperse any funds appropriated to
23 the office from the Legislature for the establishment,
24 operation, and administration of the pre-kindergarten program.
25 The budget of the office shall be part of the Department of
26 Children's Affairs.

1 (5) Assist local units of administration in this
2 state so as to assure the proliferation of services under this
3 act.

4 (6) Coordinate with the regulatory division for the
5 licensing of child care centers and with the administration of
6 the United States Child and Adult Care Food Programs at the
7 child care centers participating in the pre-kindergarten
8 program.

9 (7) Issue annual reports to the Governor and the
10 Legislature concerning the administration and operation of the
11 pre-kindergarten program.

12 (8) Provide leadership for enhancement of school
13 readiness in this state by aggressively establishing a unified
14 approach to the state's efforts toward enhancement of school
15 readiness. In support of this effort, the office may develop
16 and implement specific strategies that address the state's
17 school readiness programs.

18 (9) Safeguard the effective use of federal, state,
19 local, and private resources to achieve the highest possible
20 level of school readiness for the state's children.

21 (10) Provide technical assistance to local programs.

22 (11) Assess gaps in services.

23 (12) By January 2001, adopt a system for measuring
24 school readiness that provides objective data regarding the
25 expectations for school readiness, and establish a method for
26 collecting the data and guidelines for using the data. The

1 measurement, the data collection, and the use of the data must
2 serve the statewide school readiness goals. The criteria for
3 determining which data to collect should be the usefulness of
4 the data to state policymakers and local programs'
5 administrators in administering programs and allocating state
6 funds, and must include the tracking of school readiness
7 system information back to individual school readiness
8 programs to assist in determining program effectiveness.

9 Section 6. The following entities may voluntarily,
10 but shall not be required to, participate in the programs and
11 services administered by the Office of School Readiness:

- 12 (1) Public schools.
- 13 (2) Private schools.
- 14 (3) Churches.
- 15 (4) Existing public pre-kindergarten programs.
- 16 (5) Existing private pre-kindergarten programs.
- 17 (6) Existing non-profit pre-kindergarten programs.
- 18 (7) Any other entities or programs approved by the
19 office.

20 Section 7. As additional funds become available, all
21 programs within each county participating in school readiness
22 shall collaborate on early education and child care programs
23 that are funded with state and/or federal funding including,
24 but not limited to, adult and community education programs,
25 Even-Start literacy programs, pre-kindergarten early
26 intervention programs, Head Start programs, programs offered

1 by public and private providers of child care, migrant
2 pre-kindergarten programs, Title 1 programs, subsidized child
3 care programs, and teen parenting programs, together with any
4 additional funds appropriated or obtained for this section.
5 These programs shall be components of the integrated school
6 readiness program.

7 Section 8. This act shall not result in the net loss
8 of employees and no affected employee shall be required to
9 relocate or be forced to transfer.

10 Section 9. This act shall become effective
11 immediately following its passage and approval by the
12 Governor, or its otherwise becoming law.

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President and Presiding Officer of the Senate

Speaker of the House of Representatives

SB132

Senate 09-MAR-2000
I hereby certify that the within Act originated in and passed
the Senate.

McDowell Lee
Secretary

House of Representatives
Passed: 11-MAY-2000

By: Senator Escott-Russell