



2021 Bill Highlights

As of 5/3/2021

HB 419 & SB 1282 – Early Learning and Early Grade Success

Sponsors: Representative Grall (R- Vero Beach) & Senator Harrell (R- Stewart)

Outcome: HB 419 passed the legislature and is awaiting the governor's signature. SB 1282 has been laid on the table.

Target Population: The Department of Education, young children and their parents, and educators in VPK programs.

Summary: Revises the statewide governance of early learning programs by deleting the Office of Early Learning and creating the Division of Early Learning within the Department of Education (DOE); transfers Gold Seal Quality Care program from the Department of Children and Families to DOE; repeals Childcare Executive Partnership and establishes Council for Early Grade Success; subjects Early Learning Coalitions (ELC) to State Board of Education oversight. Revises composition of ELC membership. Establishes timeline for VPK accountability system and requires VPK providers to participate in program



assessment. Allows certain childcare providers on military installations to participate in early learning programs.

How the bills differ:

- The bills are identical.

Impact: Extensive research on infant brain development shows that a child's first five years are the most important time for learning. Within this period children develop many important skills such as executive functioning skills and language and vocabulary skills. These skills which include managing behavior and emotions are fostered by pre-kindergarten programs.

Florida currently has the second largest prekindergarten program in the nation with more than three quarters of 4 year olds attending. Unfortunately, Florida's prekindergarten program only meets 2 of 10 quality benchmarks, tying it for last in the nation in quality. Florida's VPK program had a 42% failure rate during the 2017-2018 school year, an increase of 8% from the previous year. When adjusted for inflation, the amount invested in prekindergarten has gone down the past three years.

These bills focus mainly on the administration of the early learning programs in the state of Florida. Administration change can impact the overall performance of programs, but the state needs to invest in quality components in order to see real change in how students are prepared to learn. The inclusion of an accountability measure for prekindergarten programs without providing the guidance and funding needed to increase quality will give us data but will leave these students behind. The Children's Campaign supports legislation that improves the quality of education for the state's youngest students.



Effective date: Upon becoming a law.

