

1 H.228

2 Introduced by Representative Frank of Underhill

3 Referred to Committee on

4 Date:

5 Subject: Human services; early childhood education; task force

6 Statement of purpose: This bill proposes to create an early care and education
7 task force.

8 An act relating to the creation of an early care and education task force

9 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

10 Sec. 1. EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION TASK FORCE

11 (a) Definitions. For purposes of this section:

12 (1) Early care and education services means child development services
13 provided in family child care homes, child care centers, preschool programs,
14 Early Head Start, and Head Start and Early Essential Education (EEE).

15 (2) Quality early care and education means the ten standards set out by
16 the National Association for the Education of Young Children. The ten
17 standards defining quality early care and education are:

18 (A) relationships;

19 (B) curriculum;

20 (C) teaching;

1 (D) assessment of child progress;

2 (E) health;

3 (F) teachers;

4 (G) families;

5 (H) community relationships;

6 (I) physical environment; and

7 (J) leadership and management.

8 (b)(1) Creation of task force; number of meetings. The early care and
9 education task force is created to study issues related to quality early care and
10 education in Vermont.

11 (2) Prior to January 7, 2012, the task force shall:

12 (A) meet up to six times; and

13 (B) conduct one information gathering.

14 (3) The task force, at its first meeting, shall elect one of the legislative
15 members as chair or two legislative members as cochairs.

16 (c)(1) Membership; assistance; participation. The early care and education
17 task force shall consist of 11 members. Six members of the task force shall be
18 members of the general assembly. The committee on committees of the senate
19 shall appoint three members of the senate, not all from the same political party;
20 and the speaker of the house shall appoint three members of the house, not all

1 from the same political party. Five members of the task force shall be as
2 follows:

3 (A) the commissioner of education or designee;

4 (B) the commissioner for children and families or designee;

5 (C) one representative each from the business community and early
6 advocacy community, appointed by the governor; and

7 (D) a representative from Building Bright Futures appointed by
8 Building Bright Futures.

9 (2) The task force shall receive assistance and staff services from the
10 legislative council and the joint fiscal office. Assistance and staff services
11 shall be received, as needed, from:

12 (A) the departments of:

13 (i) education;

14 (ii) health;

15 (iii) mental health;

16 (iv) taxes;

17 (v) labor;

18 (vi) economic, housing and community development; and

19 (B) the agency of human services.

20 (3) The task force, in gathering data and providing input, shall also
21 enlist the participation of:

1 (A) the Building Bright Futures state council;

2 (B) Vermont's child health care professionals;

3 (C) business and labor organizations;

4 (D) children's advocates; and

5 (E) other entities.

6 (d) Coordination; duties. In coordination with Building Bright Futures, the
7 task force shall, at a minimum:

8 (1) Identify Vermont's current investment in child development services
9 and catalogue existing efforts to improve the quality of early education
10 services, including efforts by Vermont's Step Ahead Recognition System
11 (STARS) and Northern Lights Career Development Center. In so doing, the
12 task force should include the efforts of Vermont's Step Ahead Recognition
13 System and Northern Lights Career Development Center to create an
14 infrastructure that advances and supports quality.

15 (2) Establish the baseline funding required to ensure that all young
16 children in Vermont have access to high quality early care and education
17 services, and that early childhood professionals have access to pathways of
18 improvement, including funds to:

19 (A) expand access to professional development and learning
20 opportunities for early childhood educators;

1 (B) assure early childhood professionals a livable wage and access to
2 affordable health insurance;

3 (C) link compensation to training to encourage well-qualified early
4 childhood professionals to remain in the field and encourage others to begin
5 and continue their education and training; and

6 (D) provide the foundation needed to assure that:

7 (i) programs meet minimum standards; and

8 (ii) early childhood professionals and programs are given
9 incentives to improve quality.

10 (3) Recommend public, private, and nonprofit funding sources and
11 mechanisms that together would provide full funding as established in
12 subdivision (2) of this subsection, including the establishment of a dedicated,
13 capitalized fund to be used for the purposes of increasing the quality of early
14 care and education services.

15 (e) Considerations. The task force, as it proceeds, shall consider the
16 following:

17 (1) priorities for Vermont's early care and education system as
18 determined by the children's advocacy organizations, Building Bright Futures,
19 and relevant state agencies and departments.

20 (2) recommendations from national professional organizations regarding
21 the definition of quality as it pertains to early care and education services;

1 (3) existing efforts in Vermont and nationally within the public, private,
2 and nonprofit sectors to provide financial assistance to parents to help pay for
3 early care and education; and

4 (4) existing efforts in Vermont and nationally within the public, private,
5 and nonprofit sectors to finance the delivery of early care and education
6 services.

7 Sec. 2. APPROPRIATION

8 (a) In fiscal year 2012, the amount of \$15,000.00 shall be appropriated
9 from the general fund to supplement the resources available to the legislature.

10 Appropriation of such funds shall be contingent on the availability of
11 \$15,000.00 in matching funds from private resources, to be identified by
12 Building Bright Futures.

13 (b) Funds shall be used to:

14 (1) Conduct research regarding:

15 (A) initiatives in other states to improve quality, specifically:

16 (i) ways to expand access to professional development and
17 learning opportunities for early childhood educators;

18 (ii) approaches to achieving a livable wage for early childhood
19 educators;

20 (iii) approaches for expanding access to affordable health
21 insurance for the early childhood workforce;

1 (iv) strategies for linking compensation to training to encourage
2 well-qualified early childhood professionals to remain in the field and
3 encourage others to begin and continue their education and training; and

4 (v) incentives to encourage early childhood professionals and
5 programs to improve quality.

6 (B) Strategies offered by national experts and implemented in other
7 states for financing child development services, including the supports needed
8 to ensure high quality early care and education statewide.

9 (2) Develop recommendations for improving the quality of early care
10 and education in Vermont based on research findings and input from
11 stakeholders.

12 (3) Estimate additional funds needed to implement the recommendations
13 developed from subdivision (2) of this subsection.

14 (4) Develop strategies for generating the additional funds estimated in
15 subdivision (3) of this subsection.