

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2017

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HOUSE BILL 556

Short Title: Office of Early Childhood Education. (Public)

Sponsors: Representatives Horn, Hurley, Lucas, and L. Bell (Primary Sponsors).
For a complete list of sponsors, refer to the North Carolina General Assembly web site.

Referred to: Education - K-12

April 5, 2017

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION.
3 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

4 **SECTION 1.** Chapter 115C of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new
5 Article to read:

6 "Article 6D.

7 "Office of Early Childhood Education.

8 **"§ 115C-64.25. Office of Early Childhood Education.**

9 (a) There is established an Office of Early Childhood Education. The Office shall be
10 located administratively in the Department of Public Instruction but shall exercise all its
11 prescribed powers independently of the Department of Public Instruction.

12 (b) The Office shall have staff consisting of an associate superintendent serving as the
13 chief academic officer and such other professional, administrative, technical, and clerical
14 personnel as may be necessary to assist the Office in carrying out its powers and duties. The
15 chief academic officer shall be appointed by the Superintendent of Public Instruction at a salary
16 established by the Superintendent of Public Instruction within the funds appropriated for that
17 purpose. The chief academic officer may be removed from the position by the Superintendent
18 of Public Instruction in the event of the chief academic officer's incapacity to serve. The chief
19 academic officer shall be exempt from the provisions of Chapter 126 of the General Statutes,
20 except for Articles 6 and 7 of Chapter 126 of the General Statutes.

21 (c) All other staff shall be appointed, supervised, and directed by the chief academic
22 officer of the Office and shall be subject to the provisions of Chapter 126 of the General
23 Statutes. Except for the chief academic officer, salaries and compensation of all staff personnel
24 shall be fixed in the manner provided by law for fixing and regulating salaries and
25 compensation by other State agencies.

26 **"§ 115C-64.26. Powers and duties.**

27 The Office of Early Childhood Education shall have the following powers and duties:

28 (1) Developing and implementing a plan for a coordinated system of early care,
29 education, and child development services with a focus on program
30 outcomes in satisfying the health, safety, developmental, and educational
31 needs of all children from birth to eight years of age that includes at least the
32 following:

33 a. Any recommendations to the Superintendent of Public Instruction on
34 necessary organizational changes within the Department of Public
35 Instruction, including an outline of projected efficiencies that would



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1 be realized through the operation of a new organizational structure
2 for the coordination of early childhood programs within the
3 Department.

4 b. In consultation with the administrators and personnel of the NC
5 Infant-Toddler Program and the North Carolina Pre-K Program,
6 coordination of the administration of those two programs.

7 c. An early childhood information system that facilitates and
8 encourages the sharing of data between and among early childhood
9 service providers and State agencies.

10 d. An early childhood accountability plan that includes identification of
11 appropriate population indicators and program and system
12 performance measures of the health, safety, and kindergarten
13 readiness, and identifying markers of early success of children,
14 including the North Carolina Pathways to Grade-Level Reading
15 measures of success.

16 (2) Implementing a statewide longitudinal evaluation of the educational progress
17 of children from prekindergarten programs through grade three.

18 (3) Collaborating with the Department of Public Instruction, the Department of
19 Health and Human Services, and other relevant State agencies to achieve the
20 goal of a coordinated system of early care, education, and child development
21 services for children from birth to eight years of age.

22 **"§ 115C-64.27. Reporting.**

23 The Office of Early Childhood Education shall report on a quarterly basis to the Governor,
24 the State Board of Education, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the Secretary of the
25 Department of Health and Human Services on the progress and implementation of any of the
26 duties and responsibilities of the Office as set forth in this Article."

27 **SECTION 2.** G.S. 126-5(c1) is amended by adding a new subdivision to read:

28 **"(35) The chief academic officer of the Office of Early Childhood Education."**

29 **SECTION 3.** The Office of Early Childhood Education, established under
30 G.S. 115C-64.25, as enacted by this act, shall conduct a study of the governance of State
31 government-wide management and provision of services for early childhood education and
32 development and the role of a centralized agency or office that would be responsible for early
33 childhood-related issues. In doing so, the Office shall make recommendations to the General
34 Assembly on alternative organizational structures to achieve greater efficiency and effective
35 delivery of early childhood services, including a consolidation and restructuring of State
36 agency divisions and offices located within the Department of Public Instruction and the
37 Department of Health and Human Services into a centralized agency or office. The Office shall
38 consider at least the following in conducting the study:

39 (1) The delivery of services to young children and their families to ensure
40 optimal health, safety, and learning for each young child.

41 (2) The collaboration and sharing of data elements necessary to perform quality
42 assessments and longitudinal analysis across early childhood education and
43 development services.

44 (3) The coordination of home visitation services across programs for young
45 children.

46 (4) Access to information and technical assistance to persons seeking early care
47 and education and child development programs and services.

48 (5) Available assistance for State agencies and municipalities in obtaining
49 available federal funding for early care and education and child development
50 programs and services.

- 1 (6) Available technical assistance to providers of early care and education
2 programs and services to obtain licensing and improve program quality.
3 (7) The coordination of a comprehensive statewide system of professional
4 development for providers and staff of early care and education and child
5 development programs and services.
6 (8) Integration of early childhood care and education and special education
7 services.
8 (9) Areas of duplication in monitoring and evaluation of early care and
9 education and child development programs and services.
10 (10) The coordination and support of public and private partnerships to aid early
11 childhood initiatives.
12 (11) The reports submitted, pursuant to Section 12B.5 of S.L. 2016-94, to the
13 Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services and
14 the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by the Department of
15 Health and Human Services, the Department of Public Instruction, and other
16 agencies or organizations that administer, support, or study early education
17 programs in this State on (i) the development and implementation of a
18 statewide vision for early childhood education and (ii) the development and
19 implementation of a program for transitioning children from preschool to
20 kindergarten.

21 **SECTION 4.** By March 15, 2018, the Office of Early Childhood Education shall
22 submit a report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, the Joint Legislative
23 Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services, and the Joint Legislative Commission on
24 Governmental Operations on (i) the results of the study required under Section 3 of this act,
25 including its recommendations and any proposed legislation, and (ii) progress on the
26 development and implementation of a plan for a coordinated system of early care, education,
27 and child development services and any other activities prescribed under G.S. 115C-64.26, as
28 enacted by this act.

29 **SECTION 5.** Notwithstanding G.S. 115C-64.25, the Superintendent of Public
30 Instruction shall appoint a chief academic officer of the Office of Early Childhood Education
31 within 60 days of the date this act becomes law.

32 **SECTION 6.** Notwithstanding G.S. 115C-64.27, as enacted by this act, the Office
33 of Early Childhood Education shall submit its initial quarterly report to the Governor, the State
34 Board of Education, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the Secretary of the
35 Department of Health and Human Services by May 15, 2018.

36 **SECTION 7.** This act becomes effective July 1, 2017, only if funds are
37 appropriated in a Current Operations Appropriations Act for the 2017-2018 fiscal year to
38 implement the provisions of this act.