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No. 698

H.P. 510

House of Representatives, March 4, 2021

An Act To Provide Stable Funding and Support for Child Care Providers

Received by the Clerk of the House on March 2, 2021. Referred to the Committee on Health and Human Services pursuant to Joint Rule 308.2 and ordered printed pursuant to Joint Rule 401.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "R B. Hunt".

ROBERT B. HUNT
Clerk

Presented by Representative PEBWORTH of Blue Hill.
Cosponsored by Senator BENNETT of Oxford and
Representative: MILLETT of Cape Elizabeth.

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 22 MRSA §3737, sub-§5 is enacted to read:

5. Use of contracts to improve supply of care for infants, toddlers and preschool children. The department may use up to 25% of funding received each year from the child care and development block grant authorized under the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 for providing child care services for contracts with providers of child care services at step 3 and step 4 under subsection 3 to increase the availability of care for infants, toddlers and preschool children up to 4 years of age. The contracts must prioritize continuity of high-quality care and stable settings for infants, toddlers and preschool children up to 4 years of age but may support children in another age group. To qualify for a contract, a provider of child care services under this subsection must have appropriate training in child development, child trauma, adverse childhood experience, child protective services and working with children with disabilities. The department shall ensure that any contracts issued are granted to providers of child care services under this subsection that prioritize the following at-risk populations:

A. Infants, toddlers and preschool children up to 4 years of age receiving or who have received child protective services;

B. Infants with disabilities or those referred by the Child Development Services System as defined in Title 20-A, section 7001, subsection 1-A;

C. Infants whose parents are participating in a substance use disorder treatment program;

D. Infants whose parents are or have been homeless in the preceding 6 months; and

E. Infants in geographic areas of the State where parents have few opportunities to secure high-quality infant care.

The department shall submit an annual report to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over health and human services matters no later than January 1st of each year, beginning in 2022, describing the use of contracts pursuant to this subsection. The report must include the number of contracts, the percentage of block grant funding used for the contracts and the number, grouped by paragraphs A to E, of at-risk children.

SUMMARY

This bill allows the Department of Health and Human Services to use up to 25% of the State's federal child care and development block grant funding for contracts for high-quality child care to underserved children and areas of the State. The department is required to submit an annual report to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over health and human services matters on the number of contracts, the percentage of block grant funding used for the contracts and the number of children served.