

1 STATE OF OKLAHOMA

2 1st Session of the 60th Legislature (2025)

3 HOUSE BILL 1979

By: Ranson

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6 AS INTRODUCED

7 An Act relating to children; creating the Early
8 Childhood Task Force; providing for task force
9 membership; providing for election of chair and vice-
10 chair; permitting the selection of honorary chair;
11 directing task force to provide reports; disallowing
12 certain members from receiving compensation or
13 reimbursement; permitting certain members to claim
14 certain expenses; requiring task force to be subject
15 to the Oklahoma Open Records Act and Oklahoma Open
16 Meeting Act; providing that task force documents and
17 recommendations shall only be considered advice;
18 providing a vision statement; providing a mission;
19 providing principles the task force is to be guided
20 by; providing tasks for the task force; providing for
21 codification; and providing an effective date..

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25 BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

26 SECTION 1. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
27 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 390 of Title 10, unless there is
28 created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

29 A. There is hereby created the Early Childhood Task Force to
30 study and make recommendations to improve access to and increase the
31 quantity of high-quality early childhood services.

1 B. The task force shall be comprised of seventeen (17) members
2 to be appointed as follows:

3 1. The Secretary of Human Services, or a designee;

4 2. The State Commissioner of Health, or a designee;

5 3. The Secretary of Commerce, or a designee;

6 4. The Secretary of Education, or a designee;

7 5. A representative of business selected by the State Chamber
8 of Oklahoma;

9 6. A representative of a philanthropic organization dedicated
10 to early childhood selected by the Director of Oklahoma Partnership
11 for School Readiness;

12 7. A representative selected by the Director of Oklahoma Head
13 Start;

14 8. A representative selected by the Licensed Child Care
15 Association of Oklahoma;

16 9. A representative selected by the Oklahoma Child Care
17 Association;

18 10. The Executive Director of Oklahoma Partnership for School
19 Readiness;

20 11. A representative of an early childhood advocacy
21 organization appointed by the Early Childhood Education Institute or
22 the Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy;

23 12. An Oklahoma State Senator selected by the Pro Tempore of
24 the Senate;

1 13. An Oklahoma State Representative selected by the Speaker of
2 the House of Representatives;

3 14. A representative of parents with young children selected by
4 the Oklahoma Early Childhood Program (OECF);

5 15. A representative responsible for programs under Part C of
6 the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) selected by
7 the State Commissioner of Health;

8 16. A representative from Oklahoma State University's
9 Department of Human Development and Family Science selected by the
10 Department Head of the Department of Human Development and Family
11 Science; and

12 17. A pediatric specialist selected by the Oklahoma Chapter of
13 the American Academy of Pediatrics (OKAAP).

14 C. The Early Childhood Task Force shall elect a chair and vice-
15 chair, or co-chairs, from the Task Force's membership, and the chair
16 or co-chairs shall establish rules for the Task Force's meetings and
17 the conducting of business. Upon the absence or vacancy of the
18 chair, the vice-chair shall serve as chair in an acting capacity.

19 D. An honorary chair may be selected to serve in a ceremonial
20 capacity. The honorary chair shall not serve as a voting member of
21 the Task Force but may engage with the work of the Task Force in an
22 advisory role or in a manner deemed appropriate by the chair or co-
23 chairs.

1 E. The Task Force shall develop and submit an initial report to
2 the President Pro Tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House
3 of Representatives by November 2025 and a final report by November
4 2025.

5 F. Members shall receive no compensation or reimbursement for
6 expenses and shall serve voluntarily. Officers or employees of
7 state agencies who are appointed to the Task Force as part of their
8 duties shall be authorized to participate on the Task Force and may
9 claim subsistence, allowance, mileage, or associated expenses from
10 their respective agency budgets as permitted by law.

11 G. The Task Force shall be subject to the Oklahoma Open Records
12 Act and the Oklahoma Open Meeting Act.

13 H. Plans, reports, or recommendations of any nature adopted by
14 the Task Force shall be considered advice to the Legislature and
15 shall not be construed as official policies, positions, or
16 interpretations of laws, rules, or regulations by any department or
17 agency of state government, nor shall any such department or agency
18 be bound in any manner to consider such advice when conducting their
19 advisory and regulatory affairs.

20 I. The Task Force shall be guided by the following vision
21 statement: Oklahoma children, especially those between zero (0) and
22 five (5) years of age deserve healthy childhoods that are supported
23 by a robust early childhood system which improves outcomes and
24 effectively provides high-quality early care and education, improves

1 and enhances school readiness, adapts to the needs of families and
2 communities, and is equitably accessible to all communities across
3 the state.

4 J. The Task Force shall work towards the mission of creating a
5 framework for a more efficient and effective governance structure
6 for early childhood programming, such as a coordinated,
7 consolidated, or new independent agency.

8 K. The Task Force's work shall be guided by a commitment to the
9 following principles:

10 1. Children, family, and community well-being shall be centered
11 throughout the Early Childhood Task Force's work;

12 2. Efforts shall be focused on maximizing efficiencies to
13 reduce the administrative burdens on families and improve access to
14 early childhood services through the creation of a new governance
15 structure;

16 3. Any possible consolidation of early childhood services shall
17 be informed by what families and communities say they want and need;

18 4. Access to programs and services shall be equitable and
19 available to all children and families regardless of socioeconomic
20 status or geographic location;

21 5. Intentional focus shall be placed on developing strategies
22 to reach families and young children in care deserts or furthest
23 from opportunity and existing resources;

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1 6. Access to affordable and quality health care, nutrition,
2 early education and care, mental health, home visiting, early
3 intervention, support for families, early learning, and other
4 services in the critical prenatal to five (5) age period will
5 decisively impact academic success, economic opportunities, and the
6 prosperity of Oklahoma;

7 7. Efforts shall be made to use data-informed approaches and
8 explore better ways to develop shared data systems;

9 8. Work shall focus on strengthening and expanding the early
10 education and care delivery system already in use in Oklahoma;

11 9. Alignment across sectors and state agencies will increase
12 capacity, maximize funding, and create a more streamlined delivery
13 of services;

14 10. The importance of growing a diverse and well-supported
15 early childhood workforce shall remain at the forefront and be
16 informed by the Task Force's work;

17 11. While focusing on advancing the delivery system, work shall
18 highlight the importance of defining quality care and expanding
19 capacity and access to create a greater quantity of quality
20 services;

21 12. To incentivize innovation and respond to family needs,
22 communities must be empowered to develop local, community-based
23 solutions that take a whole-child and whole-family approach in
24 responding to needs;

1 13. To ensure holistic childhood well-being and improve health
2 outcomes, there must be alignment between state efforts to improve
3 early learning and care and existing prenatal and maternal health
4 initiatives; and

5 14. Strengthening early childhood developmental health is vital
6 to ensuring that children are prepared to achieve academic success
7 and are setup for lifelong learning.

8 L. The Task Force's duties shall include:

9 1. Conducting an analysis of the current early childhood
10 delivery system in Oklahoma and how it is financed with specific
11 focus on gaps, inefficiencies, and redundancies. This work should
12 focus on how creating a new governance structure for early childhood
13 services could overcome these challenges and improve how care is
14 delivered, accessed, and funded. This analysis must specifically
15 include:

16 a. a review of current early childhood programs and
17 policies dispersed between the Department of Human
18 Services, State Department of Health, Oklahoma
19 Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse
20 Services, and the State Department of Education. The
21 review should pay special attention to where current
22 statutory authority over certain operations exists and
23 where possible areas of redundancy occur,

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- 1 b. a review of how current funding systems blend and
2 various funding opportunities, with special attention
3 as to how funding streams are currently utilized for
4 early childhood programs that are housed across
5 departments. This fiscal review should map the routes
6 all private, public, federal, and state funding
7 streams take from funding authority to program
8 application,
- 9 c. a review of how Oklahoma might integrate existing
10 programming into a consolidated delivery system and
11 what needs might exist for new programming that the
12 state currently lacks,
- 13 d. recommendations on how cross-agency collaboration and
14 partnerships can be fostered to develop a whole-of-
15 government approach to strengthening the delivery of
16 early childhood services, specifically ensuring that
17 data infrastructure is integrated across agencies,
18 account for both qualitative and quantitative methods,
19 and can be widely utilized by multiple state agencies,
- 20 e. recommendations on how a new governance structure
21 might maximize efficiencies for early childhood
22 providers and their workforce. This work should
23 determine how licensing, workforce development and
24 support, and facility review can be improved to

1 eliminate barriers to entry for providers and
2 professionals. This should also include a review of
3 current regulatory structures that complicate the
4 process of entering the early childhood sector,

- 5 f. recommendations on how a new governance structure can
6 strengthen the existing health care workforce to
7 better support the development of young children and
8 well-being of mothers through improved access to
9 comprehensive and preventive care. This should also
10 include a review of how to secure improved health
11 outcomes for children, financial sustainability of
12 delivery models, and cultivating workforce pipelines,
13 g. an analysis of key lessons learned from states already
14 advancing consolidated systems of early childhood
15 governance to inform Oklahoma's own process;

16 2. Conducting a series of stakeholder engagement opportunities
17 to elicit feedback on the current early childhood governance
18 structure and better understand the needs of parents, families,
19 providers, and businesses;

20 3. Following the engagement of stakeholders, the Task Force
21 shall conduct a review that synthesizes feedback received from
22 families, providers, community leaders, and the business sector.
23 This review shall include recommendations on how the state delivery
24 system and governance model can be improved to respond to family and

1 community needs. It shall also include recommendations for how the
2 state can better engage with parents, families, and communities on a
3 regular basis to ensure family voice is centered in the work of
4 state agencies;

5 4. Drafting a proposed transition plan to ensure the continuous
6 operation of state services upon the creation of a new governance
7 structure for early childhood. This plan shall:

8 a. include detailed recommendations for what programs and
9 services should remain in their current place or
10 transition into a new governance structure. Each
11 recommendation shall consider the challenges and
12 benefits of moving programs,

13 b. focus on movement between agencies and how
14 collaboration can be strengthened with nonexecutive
15 agencies. It shall also include recommendations for
16 any necessary interagency agreements,

17 c. include a review of what additional funding and
18 resources might be needed to transition to a new
19 governance structure effectively and efficiently,

20 d. provide recommended goals and metrics for the new
21 entity to strive towards once operational; and

22 5. Drafting proposed legislation that creates a new governance
23 structure that oversees Oklahoma's early childhood education and
24 care programs.

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SECTION 2. This act shall become effective November 1, 2025.

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