

HOUSE BILL NO. 648

INTRODUCED BY A. BUCKLEY, T. WELCH, G. NIKOLAKAKOS, G. FRAZER, E. BUTTREY, G. OBLANDER,
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HOWELL

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE BEST BEGINNINGS CHILD CARE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM; SETTING THE INCOME ELIGIBILITY LEVEL AT ~~200%~~ 185% OF THE FEDERAL POVERTY LEVEL; REQUIRING A MONTHLY COPAYMENT FROM AN ELIGIBLE FAMILY; PROVIDING AN APPROPRIATION; AMENDING SECTION 52-2-713, MCA; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE."

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

NEW SECTION. **Section 1. Best beginnings child care scholarship program.** There is a best beginnings child care scholarship program administered by the department. The program is established to provide scholarships to qualified low-income families whose child received care provided by a licensed OR REGISTERED child care provider or day-care facility.

NEW SECTION. **Section 2. Family income eligibility requirements.** In determining income eligibility for the best beginnings child care scholarship program, the department shall:

(1) set a qualifying income threshold at no less than ~~200%~~ 185% of the federal poverty level for each family size; AND

(2) SET A MAXIMUM QUALIFYING INCOME LEVEL THAT IS NO HIGHER THAN THAT ALLOWED BY THE FEDERAL CHILD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT.

NEW SECTION. **Section 3. Copayment requirements.** Each eligible family shall participate in the cost of child care by making a copayment. ~~The department shall establish the following copayment amounts:~~

(1) ~~for an eligible family with a qualifying income less than 100% of the federal poverty level, a~~

1 copayment of \$10 for each eligible family for each month; and
2 (2) ~~for an eligible family with a qualifying income of 100% of the federal poverty level or more, a~~
3 ~~copayment based~~ BASED on a sliding fee scale not to exceed ~~7%~~ 9% of an eligible family's monthly income.

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5 **Section 4.** Section 52-2-713, MCA, is amended to read:

6 **"52-2-713. Payments for eligible children.** The department shall pay a rate ~~established by the~~
7 ~~department and appropriated by the legislature~~ ESTABLISHED BY THE DEPARTMENT AND APPROPRIATED BY THE
8 LEGISLATURE based on a child's AUTHORIZED enrollment SLOT and set at the child's monthly authorized amount to
9 a day-care facility licensed or registered by the department for each child receiving day-care service and
10 certified eligible by the department to receive day-care services."

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12 NEW SECTION. Section 5. Appropriation. There is appropriated \$~~10~~ \$7 million from the general
13 fund to the department of public health and human services in each year of the biennium beginning July 1,
14 2023, for the purposes of [sections 1 through 4]. THIS APPROPRIATION IS RESTRICTED FOR USE FOR THE PURPOSES
15 OF CARRYING OUT [SECTIONS 1 THROUGH 4]. THE DEPARTMENT SHALL MAXIMIZE ALL EXISTING GENERAL, STATE
16 SPECIAL, AND FEDERAL FUNDS APPROPRIATED FOR THE PURPOSES OF CARRYING OUT THE BEST BEGINNINGS
17 SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM PRIOR TO ACCESSING THIS APPROPRIATION.

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19 NEW SECTION. Section 6. Codification instruction. [Sections 1 through 3] are intended to be
20 codified as an integral part of Title 52, chapter 2, part 7, and the provisions of Title 52, chapter 2, part 7, apply
21 to [sections 1 through 3].

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23 NEW SECTION. Section 7. Effective date. [This act] is effective July 1, 2023.

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