



AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE BEST BEGINNINGS CHILD CARE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM; SETTING THE INCOME ELIGIBILITY LEVEL AT 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:

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.

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 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.

Section 3. Copayment requirements. Each eligible family shall participate in the cost of child care by making a copayment based on a sliding fee scale not to exceed 9% of an eligible family's monthly income.

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

"52-2-713. Payments for eligible children. The department shall pay a rate ~~established by the~~

~~department and appropriated by the legislature~~ established by the department and appropriated by the legislature based on a child's authorized enrollment slot to a day-care facility licensed or registered by the department for each child receiving day-care service and certified eligible by the department to receive day-care services."

Section 5. Appropriation. There is appropriated \$7 million from the general fund to the department of public health and human services in each year of the biennium beginning July 1, 2023, for the purposes of [sections 1 through 4]. This appropriation is restricted for use for the purposes of carrying out [sections 1 through 4]. The department shall maximize all existing general, state special, and federal funds appropriated for the purposes of carrying out the best beginnings scholarship program prior to accessing this appropriation.

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

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

- END -

I hereby certify that the within bill,
HB 648, originated in the House.

Chief Clerk of the House

Speaker of the House

Signed this _____ day
of _____, 2023.

President of the Senate

Signed this _____ day
of _____, 2023.

HOUSE BILL NO. 648

INTRODUCED BY A. BUCKLEY, T. WELCH, G. NIKOLAKAKOS, G. FRAZER, E. BUTTREY, G. OBLANDER,
M. YAKAWICH, S. FITZPATRICK, D. SALOMON, B. BARKER, K. ABBOTT, J. KASSMIER, J. KARLEN, S.

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