

Assembly Bill No. 2960

CHAPTER 829

An act to add Article 1.1 (commencing with Section 8209.6) to Chapter 2 of Part 6 of Division 1 of Title 1 of the Education Code, relating to child care and development services.

[Approved by Governor September 27, 2018. Filed with
Secretary of State September 27, 2018.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2960, Thurmond. Child care and development services: online portal.

The Child Care and Development Services Act has a purpose of providing a comprehensive, coordinated, and cost-effective system of child care and development services for children from infancy to 13 years of age and their parents, including a full range of supervision, health, and support services through full- and part-time programs. Existing law designates the State Department of Education as the single state agency responsible for the promotion, development, and provision of care of children in the absence of their parents during the workday or while engaged in other activities that require assistance of a third party. Existing law requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction to administer general child care and development programs.

This bill would require the Superintendent, subject to the availability of public or private funding for these purposes, on or before June 30, 2022, to develop and post on the department's Internet Web site, for use by the general public, an online portal for the state's comprehensive child care and development services, as provided. The bill would require the Superintendent, in planning for future enhancements to the online portal, to convene, on or before June 30, 2019, a workgroup made up of specified stakeholders. The bill would require the workgroup, on or before June 30, 2020, to evaluate and provide recommendations to the Superintendent on any necessary modifications or improvements to the online portal to ensure its improved effectiveness, including the consideration of possible models for, and plans for inclusion in the online portal of, specified components. The bill would require the Superintendent, on or before January 1, 2021, to submit to the appropriate committees of the Legislature a comprehensive plan for implementing the recommendations of the workgroup and a report that proposes plans for enhancements to the online portal based on the above recommendations from the workgroup, as provided.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) The disparity in educational outcomes between pupil populations with regard to test scores, graduation rates, and college readiness is one of the most serious challenges facing our public education system.

(b) Access to high quality, affordable child care and development services is essential to prepare California's children to succeed in school and in life and to allow families to work and contribute to the state's economy with the assurance that their children are safe, well cared for, and learning.

(c) Expanded learning opportunities are also essential for children's safety and to ensure that academic gains made during the schoolday are retained. With 80 percent of waking hours for schoolage children spent outside of the classroom, quality and affordable expanded learning experiences after school and in the summer are essential strategies for equalizing pupil outcomes. Families also need care beyond the schoolday in order to work.

(d) California's current child care and development services encompass multiple programs with distinct histories, missions, and funding streams, yet share similar purposes. These programs include home visits, early childhood special education programs, school readiness programs, such as California State Preschool, Head Start and Early Head Start, and transitional kindergarten, programs designed to support working parents, such as general child care and development and voucher-based alternative payment programs, including CalWORKs, and after school programs such as the After School Education and Safety Program and the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program.

(e) California's rich delivery system of child care and early education programs has evolved to support parental choice in accessing services that balance the developmental needs of children with the working needs of families. Families are supported with access to racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse child development services, with information delivered in a format that best supports informed choices and that will maximize longer-term educational outcomes.

(f) Eligible families in California struggle to access child care and development services that they and their children need and deserve, due to a lack of service capacity statewide, but also due to complex and siloed eligibility and enrollment requirements. Families also deserve information about all the child development services for which their children may be eligible, in order to make informed decisions about where to enroll their children.

(g) Harnessing the power of technology to extend the reach of child care and development services as a system while preserving the distinct missions of each program would help to ensure that the state's investments get to more of the children and families who need them.

(h) The federal Child Care and Development Block Grant of 2014 (Public Law 113-186) is the primary program for early childhood education and

requires states to have a child care and development consumer education Internet Web site to support parents in making informed choices for child care. The child care and development consumer education Internet Web site is currently in development and is the foundation for the online portal.

SEC. 2. Article 1.1 (commencing with Section 8209.6) is added to Chapter 2 of Part 6 of Division 1 of Title 1 of the Education Code, to read:

Article 1.1. Online Portal for Child Care and Development Services

8209.6. (a) It is the intent of the Legislature in adopting this article that every family in California have access to current and robust information regarding the state's vast array of child care and development services through a publicly available online portal hosted and maintained by the department that includes, among other things, program and eligibility information, the opportunity to connect with resource and referral agencies and providers, the ability to use an online eligibility screening tool in order to assess eligibility for services, a way to link to local child care resource and referral agencies and alternative payment programs for additional assistance in selecting and assessing child care, and access to placement on waiting lists for local subsidized child care programs.

(b) On or before June 30, 2022, the Superintendent shall develop and post on the department's Internet Web site, for use by the general public, an online portal for California's comprehensive child care and development services.

(c) (1) In planning for future enhancements to the online portal, the Superintendent shall convene, on or before June 30, 2019, a workgroup made up of stakeholders, including, but not limited to, representatives of child care resource and referral programs, alternative payment programs, contracted center-based programs, First 5 county commissions, county offices of education, school-based providers, private center-based care providers, and family child care homes. This workgroup shall, on or before June 30, 2020, evaluate, and provide recommendations to the Superintendent on any necessary modifications or improvements to the online portal to ensure its improved effectiveness, including the consideration of possible models for, and plans for inclusion in the online portal of, components, including, but not limited to, both of the following:

(A) Components to link parents to local child care resource and referral agencies and alternative payment programs for additional assistance in selecting and assessing child care and to place parents on waiting lists for local subsidized child care programs for which subsidized slots are not readily available.

(B) An online eligibility screening tool used to assess eligibility for services.

(2) (A) On or before January 1, 2021, the Superintendent shall submit to the appropriate committees of the Legislature a comprehensive plan for implementing the recommendations of the workgroup and a report proposing

plans for enhancements to the online portal, based on recommendations received from the workgroup developed pursuant to paragraph (1), including the components described in subparagraphs (A) and (B) of paragraph (1).

(B) The Superintendent may contract with an outside entity for purposes of completing the report required pursuant to subparagraph (A).

(C) Pursuant to Section 10231.5 of the Government Code, the requirement for submitting a report imposed by this paragraph is inoperative on January 1, 2025.

(d) The requirements of this section are subject to the availability of public or private funding for the purposes of this section. The department may accept grants or in-kind support from any source, public or private, to help perform the requirements of this section.