

STATE OF OKLAHOMA

2nd Session of the 60th Legislature (2026)

SUBCOMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

FOR

HOUSE BILL NO. 1979

By: Ranson

SUBCOMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

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

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

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

A. There is hereby created the Early Childhood Task Force to study and make recommendations to improve service access to and

1 delivery to families and children and increase the quantity of high-  
2 quality early childhood services.

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

5 1. The Director of the Department of Human Services, or a  
6 designee;

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

8 3. The Director of the Department of Commerce, or a designee;

9 4. The State Superintendent of Public Instruction, or a  
10 designee;

11 5. The Director of the Oklahoma Health Care Authority, or a  
12 designee;

13 6. A representative of the Oklahoma State Chamber appointed by  
14 the Governor;

15 7. A child care provider who is a member of either the Licensed  
16 Child Care Association of Oklahoma or the Oklahoma Child Care  
17 Association appointed by the Department of Human Services;

18 8. A representative of an Oklahoma parent-child support  
19 organization selected by the Director of the Early Childhood  
20 Education Institute;

21 9. The Executive Director of Oklahoma Partnership for School  
22 Readiness, or a designee;

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1        10. A representative of the Oklahoma Association for the  
2 Education of the Young Child appointed by the State Superintendent  
3 of Public Instruction;

4        11. An Oklahoma State Senator selected by the President Pro  
5 Tempore of the Senate;

6        12. An Oklahoma State Representative selected by the Speaker of  
7 the House of Representatives;

8        13 A director of a public school early childhood program  
9 appointed by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction;

10       14. A representative responsible for programs under Part C of  
11 the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) selected by  
12 the State Commissioner of Health;

13       15. A representative from Oklahoma State University's  
14 Department of Human Development and Family Science selected by the  
15 Dean of the College of Education and Human Sciences of Oklahoma  
16 State University;

17       16. A pediatric specialist selected by the Chair of the  
18 Department of Pediatrics of the University of Oklahoma College of  
19 Medicine; and

20       17. A representative of the Oklahoma Association of Infant  
21 Mental Health appointed by the Director of the Department of Mental  
22 Health and Substance Abuse Services or the Department of Psychology  
23 of Oklahoma State University.

1 C. The Early Childhood Task Force shall elect a chair and vice-  
2 chair, or co-chairs, from the Task Force's membership, and the chair  
3 or co-chairs shall establish rules for the Task Force's meetings and  
4 the conducting of business. Upon the absence or vacancy of the  
5 chair, the vice-chair shall serve as chair in an acting capacity.

6 D. An honorary chair may be selected to serve in a ceremonial  
7 capacity. The honorary chair shall not serve as a voting member of  
8 the Task Force but may engage with the work of the Task Force in an  
9 advisory role or in a manner deemed appropriate by the chair or co-  
10 chairs.

11 E. The Task Force shall develop and submit an initial report to  
12 the President Pro Tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House  
13 of Representatives by November 2027 and a final report by November  
14 2028.

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

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

23 H. Plans, reports, or recommendations of any nature adopted by  
24 the Task Force shall be considered advice to the Legislature and

1 shall not be construed as official policies, positions, or  
2 interpretations of laws, rules, or regulations by any department or  
3 agency of state government, nor shall any such department or agency  
4 be bound in any manner to consider such advice when conducting its  
5 advisory and regulatory affairs.

6 I. The Task Force shall be guided by the following vision  
7 statement: Oklahoma children, especially those between zero (0) and  
8 five (5) years of age, deserve healthy childhoods that are supported  
9 by a robust early childhood system which improves outcomes and  
10 effectively provides high-quality early care and education, improves  
11 and enhances school readiness, adapts to the needs of families and  
12 communities, and is equitably accessible to all communities across  
13 the state.

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

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

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

22 2. Efforts shall be focused on maximizing efficiencies to  
23 reduce the administrative burdens on families and improve access to  
24

1 early childhood services through the creation of a new governance  
2 structure;

3 3. Any possible consolidation of early childhood services shall  
4 be informed by what families and communities say are wanted and  
5 needed;

6 4. Access to programs and services shall be equitable and  
7 available to all children and families regardless of socioeconomic  
8 status or geographic location;

9 5. Intentional focus shall be placed on developing strategies  
10 to reach families and young children in health care, early  
11 education, and care deserts or furthest from opportunity and  
12 existing resources;

13 6. Access to affordable and quality health care, nutrition,  
14 early education and care, mental health, home visiting, early  
15 intervention, support for families, early learning, and other  
16 services in the critical prenatal to five-year-age period will  
17 decisively impact academic success, economic development  
18 opportunities, and the prosperity of Oklahoma;

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

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

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1        9. Alignment across sectors and state agencies shall increase  
2 capacity, maximize funding, and create a more streamlined delivery  
3 of services;

4        10. The importance of growing a well-educated and well-  
5 supported early childhood workforce shall remain at the forefront  
6 and be informed by the Task Force's work;

7        11. While focusing on advancing the delivery system, work shall  
8 highlight the importance of defining quality care and expanding  
9 capacity and access to create a greater quantity of quality  
10 services;

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

15       13. To ensure holistic childhood well-being and improve health  
16 outcomes, there must be alignment between state efforts to improve  
17 early learning and care and existing prenatal and maternal health  
18 initiatives; and

19       14. Strengthening early childhood developmental health is vital  
20 to ensuring that children are prepared to achieve academic success  
21 and are prepared for lifelong learning.

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

23       1. Conducting an analysis of the current early childhood  
24 delivery system in Oklahoma and how it is financed with specific

1 focus on gaps, inefficiencies, and redundancies. This work should  
2 focus on how creating a new governance structure for early childhood  
3 services could overcome these challenges and improve how care is  
4 delivered, accessed, and funded. This analysis must specifically  
5 include:

6           a. a review of current early childhood programs and  
7 policies dispersed between the Department of Human  
8 Services, State Department of Health, Department of  
9 Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, State  
10 Department of Commerce, Oklahoma Health Care  
11 Authority, and the State Department of Education. The  
12 review should pay special attention to where current  
13 statutory authority over certain operations exists and  
14 where possible areas of redundancy occur,

15           b. a review of how current funding systems blend and  
16 various funding opportunities, with special attention  
17 as to how funding streams are currently utilized for  
18 early childhood programs that are housed across  
19 departments. This fiscal review should map the routes  
20 all private, public, federal, and state funding  
21 streams take from funding authority to program  
22 application,

23           c. a review of how Oklahoma might integrate existing  
24 programming into a consolidated delivery system and

1           what needs might exist for new programming that the  
2           state currently lacks,

3           d.    recommendations on how cross-agency collaboration and  
4           partnerships can be fostered to develop a whole-of-  
5           government approach to strengthening the delivery of  
6           early childhood services, specifically ensuring that  
7           data infrastructure is integrated across agencies,  
8           account for both qualitative and quantitative methods,  
9           and can be widely utilized by multiple state agencies,

10          e.    recommendations on how a new governance structure  
11          might maximize efficiencies for early childhood  
12          providers and their workforce. This work should  
13          determine how licensing, workforce development and  
14          support, and facility review can be improved to  
15          eliminate barriers to entry for providers and  
16          professionals. This should also include a review of  
17          current regulatory structures that complicate the  
18          process of entering the early childhood sector,

19          f.    recommendations on how a new governance structure can  
20          strengthen the existing health care workforce to  
21          better support the development of young children and  
22          well-being of mothers through improved access to  
23          comprehensive and preventive care. This should also  
24          include a review of how to secure improved health

1 outcomes for children, financial sustainability of  
2 delivery models, and cultivating workforce pipelines,  
3 and

4 g. an analysis of key lessons learned from states already  
5 advancing consolidated systems of early childhood  
6 governance to inform Oklahoma's own process;

7 2. Conducting a series of stakeholder engagement opportunities  
8 to elicit feedback on the current early childhood governance  
9 structure and better understand the needs of parents, families,  
10 providers, and businesses;

11 3. Following the engagement of stakeholders, the Task Force  
12 shall conduct a review that synthesizes feedback received from  
13 families, providers, community leaders, and the business sector.  
14 This review shall include recommendations on how the state delivery  
15 system and governance model can be improved to respond to family and  
16 community needs. It shall also include recommendations for how the  
17 state can better engage with parents, families, and communities on a  
18 regular basis to ensure family voice is centered in the work of  
19 state agencies;

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

23 a. include detailed recommendations for what programs and  
24 services should remain in their current place or

1 transition into a new governance structure. Each  
2 recommendation shall consider the challenges and  
3 benefits of moving programs,

4 b. focus on movement between agencies and how  
5 collaboration can be strengthened with nonexecutive  
6 agencies. It shall also include recommendations for  
7 any necessary interagency agreements,

8 c. include a review of what additional funding, if any,  
9 and resources, if any, might be needed to transition  
10 to a new governance structure effectively and  
11 efficiently, and

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

14 5. Drafting proposed legislation that creates a new governance  
15 structure that oversees Oklahoma's early childhood education and  
16 care programs.

17 SECTION 2. This act shall become effective November 1, 2026.

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