

1 _____ BILL NO. _____
 2 INTRODUCED BY _____
 3 (Primary Sponsor)

4 A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT EXPANDING THE BEST BEGINNINGS CHILD CARE
 5 SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM TO PROVIDE SCHOLARSHIPS TO CHILD-CARE WORKERS EMPLOYED BY A
 6 LICENSED DAY-CARE CENTER OR REGISTERED FAMILY OR GROUP DAY-CARE HOME; PROVIDING
 7 AN APPROPRIATION; AMENDING SECTIONS 52-2-714 AND 52-2-715, MCA; AND PROVIDING AN
 8 EFFECTIVE DATE."

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

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 12 **Section 1.** Section 52-2-714, MCA, is amended to read:

13 **"52-2-714. Best beginnings child care scholarship program.** There is a best beginnings child care
 14 scholarship program administered by the department. The program is established to provide scholarships to
 15 qualified low-income families and eligible child-care workers employed at a licensed day-care center or
 16 registered family or group day-care home whose child received care provided by a licensed or registered child
 17 care child-care provider or day-care facility."

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 19 **Section 2.** Section 52-2-715, MCA, is amended to read:

20 **"52-2-715. Family income eligibility -- child-care worker eligibility -- requirements.** ~~(1) Except~~
 21 as provided in subsection (2), in determining income eligibility for qualified low-income families for the best
 22 beginnings child care scholarship program, the department shall:

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

25 ~~(2)(b)~~ set a maximum qualifying income level that is no higher than that allowed by the federal child
 26 care and development block grant.

27 ~~(2)~~ (a) A child-care worker is eligible for the best beginnings child care scholarship program if the
 28 worker is employed at a licensed day-care center or registered family or group day-care home and is engaged

1 in any of the eligible activities, as established by the department pursuant to 45 CFR 98.16(g), for at least the
2 required minimum number of hours.

3 (b) The income eligibility requirements provided in subsection (1) do not apply to a child-care
4 worker who is otherwise eligible under this subsection (2)."

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6 NEW SECTION. Section 3. Appropriation. There is appropriated \$5.5 million from the general fund
7 to the department of public health and human services for each year of the biennium beginning July 1, 2025, for
8 the purposes of providing best beginnings child care scholarships to eligible child-care workers as provided in
9 [section 1].

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11 NEW SECTION. Section 4. Effective date. [This act] is effective July 1, 2025.

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