

HOUSE BILL NO. 456

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

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

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

"52-2-714. 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 and eligible child-care workers employed at a licensed day-care center or registered family or group day-care home whose child received care provided by a licensed or registered child care-child-care provider or day-care facility."

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

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

~~(4)(a)~~ set a qualifying income threshold at no less than 185% of the federal poverty level for each family size; and

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

(2) ~~(a)~~ A child-care worker is eligible for the best beginnings child care scholarship program if the worker:

(A) is employed at a licensed day-care center or registered family or group day-care home and is engaged in any of the eligible activities, FOR AT LEAST THE MINIMUM NUMBER OF HOURS REQUIRED as established by the department pursuant to 45 CFR 98.16(g), ~~for at least the required minimum number of hours ; AND~~

(B) HAS A HOUSEHOLD INCOME THAT IS LESS THAN TWO TIMES THE STATE MEDIAN INCOME.

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

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

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

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