

State of Arkansas

77th General Assembly

Regular Session, 1989

A Bill

SENATE BILL

288

By: Senator Fitch

For An Act To Be Entitled

"AN ACT TO AMEND ARKANSAS CODE TITLE 6, SUBTITLE 3, BY ADDING CHAPTER 44 TO PROVIDE FOR THE CREATION OF THE ARKANSAS BETTER CHANCE PROGRAM WHICH SHALL BE USED TO IDENTIFY AND ASSIST EDUCATIONALLY DEPRIVED THREE AND FOUR-YEAR OLD CHILDREN IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR LEARNING SKILLS; TO DECLARE AN EMERGENCY; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES."

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

SECTION 1. Arkansas Code Title 6, Subtitle 3, is hereby amended by adding Chapter 44 to read as follows:

"6-44-101. The title of this Chapter shall be "THE ARKANSAS BETTER CHANCE (ABC) PROGRAM ACT."

6-44-102. Legislative Intent. It is the intent of the Arkansas General Assembly to expand the availability of developmentally appropriate preschool programs including, but not limited, Headstart and Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youths (HIPPY). These type programs have been shown to produce sizeable gains in the skill levels of educationally disadvantaged children. Because the proper development of these children increases the chances that they will be more successful students and ultimately more productive citizens, the General Assembly finds that the state should target assistance to educationally deprived preschool-aged children by funding successful and innovative programs that are designed to increase the learning of these children.

6-44-103. Definitions. For the purposes of this Chapter, the following definitions shall apply:

(a) 'Department' means the General Education Division of the Arkansas Department of Education or its authorized agents.

(b) 'appropriate preschool program' means a preschool program for three

and/or four year-olds approved by the Department of Education, as complying with regulatory guidelines to be issued by the Department pursuant to this Chapter.

(c) 'Arkansas Early Childhood Commission' or 'Commission' means a seventeen member advisory body appointed by the Governor to perform certain duties and responsibilities relating to the development, expansion, and coordination of early childhood program including, but not limited to, serving as the advisory body to the General Education Division of the Arkansas Department of Education on early childhood program issues.

6-44-104. Establishment of the ABC Program. The Department shall establish the Arkansas Better Chance Program to assist in the establishment and funding of appropriate preschool programs for three and four year-old children. Beginning with the 1989-90 school year, the Department shall award grants to appropriate preschool programs selected by the Department in accordance with specified programmatic standards developed by the Department, with the advice and assistance of the Arkansas Early Childhood Commission. The programmatic standards and other rules and regulations necessary for the implementation of this program shall be adopted by the State Board of Education in accordance with the provisions of the Arkansas Administrative Procedures Act.

6-44-105. Application Process.

(a) Any not-for-profit, non-sectarian preschool program may apply for funding, regardless of the sponsorship of the program. Local school districts may apply for funding to operate preschool programs but an appropriate preschool program need not be affiliated with a school district in order to receive grant money.

(b) To be considered, an application must contain all information required by the Department's regulatory guidelines.

(c) The Department, with the advice of the Commission, shall fund those applications which comply with the programmatic standards and other relevant criteria. If the Department receives more applications that qualify for funding than can be fully funded with the funds available for this program, the Department, after seeking the advice of the Commission, shall determine whether to prorate the available funds among all qualified applications or to allocate the available funds among less than all applications which qualify for funding.

(d) In allocating funding during the first funding cycle, priority consideration shall be given to applicant programs which have demonstrated that their programs have the capacity to identify and serve three and four year-olds whose family circumstances suggest significant education deprivation.

6-44-106. Publication of Department's Criteria. The Department shall annually provide notification to school districts and to other appropriate child care providers of the availability of funds under the Arkansas Better Chance Program and shall include in such notification the programmatic standards and criteria for determination of eligibility for funding under the Arkansas Better Chance Program.

6-44-107. Criteria for Determining Need. The Department and the Commission shall review various criteria for identifying and targeting the areas of the state with the greatest need for preschool assistance. By September 1, 1989, the State Board of Education, with the advice and assistance of the Commission, shall adopt the appropriate criteria for identifying Arkansas children with the greatest need to participate in Arkansas Better Chance funded preschool programs."

SECTION 2. All provisions of this Act of a general and permanent nature are amendatory to the Arkansas Code of 1987 Annotated and the Arkansas Code Revision Commission shall incorporate the same in the Code.

SECTION 3. All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are hereby repealed.

SECTION 4. Emergency Clause. It is hereby found and determined by the General Assembly that a need exists to provide state financial assistance to appropriate preschool programs that identify and serve three and four year-old educationally deprived preschool children. Therefore, an emergency is hereby declared to exist and this act being necessary for the preservation and protection of the public peace, health, and safety shall be in full force and effect from July 1, 1989.