

HOUSE BILL No. 1308

DIGEST OF INTRODUCED BILL

Citations Affected: IC 12-17.2-7.8.

Synopsis: Indiana bright start program and fund. Establishes the Indiana bright start program (program) to support the early learning and child care needs of working families with eligible children. Provides that the office of the secretary of family and social services (office) shall develop and implement the program, and may contract with nonprofit corporations to facilitate the program. Establishes the Indiana bright start program fund. Requires the office, beginning October 1, 2027, to annually submit a report to the governor and legislative council with information concerning the program.

Effective: July 1, 2026.

Burton

January 6, 2026, read first time and referred to Committee on Family, Children and Human Affairs.



Introduced

Second Regular Session of the 124th General Assembly (2026)

PRINTING CODE. Amendments: Whenever an existing statute (or a section of the Indiana Constitution) is being amended, the text of the existing provision will appear in this style type, additions will appear in **this style type**, and deletions will appear in ~~this style type~~.

Additions: Whenever a new statutory provision is being enacted (or a new constitutional provision adopted), the text of the new provision will appear in **this style type**. Also, the word **NEW** will appear in that style type in the introductory clause of each SECTION that adds a new provision to the Indiana Code or the Indiana Constitution.

Conflict reconciliation: Text in a statute in *this style type* or ~~this style type~~ reconciles conflicts between statutes enacted by the 2025 Regular Session of the General Assembly.

HOUSE BILL No. 1308

A BILL FOR AN ACT to amend the Indiana Code concerning human services.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Indiana:

1 SECTION 1. IC 12-17.2-7.8 IS ADDED TO THE INDIANA CODE
2 AS A NEW CHAPTER TO READ AS FOLLOWS [EFFECTIVE
3 JULY 1, 2026]:

4 **Chapter 7.8. Indiana Bright Start Program and Fund**

5 **Sec. 1. As used in this chapter, "accepted intermediary" refers**
6 **to a nonprofit corporation that has entered into an agreement with**
7 **the office to facilitate the Indiana bright start program under**
8 **section 11 of this chapter.**

9 **Sec. 2. As used in this chapter, "CCDF" refers to the federal**
10 **Child Care and Development Fund program administered under**
11 **45 CFR 98 and 45 CFR 99.**

12 **Sec. 3. As used in this chapter, "eligible child" refers to an**
13 **individual who is:**

14 **(1) less than five (5) years of age on August 1 of the state fiscal**
15 **year for which a grant is sought under the Indiana bright**
16 **start program;**
17 **(2) a resident of Indiana or otherwise has legal settlement in**



Indiana, as determined under IC 20-26-11; and

(3) unable to participate in the prekindergarten program (as described in IC 12-17.2-7.2-5) or CCDF because the individual:

- (A) is a member of a household with an annual income that exceeds eligibility limits; or**
- (B) has been placed on a wait list.**

Sec. 4. As used in this chapter, "eligible provider" refers to a provider that satisfies the following conditions:

(1) The provider is:

(A) a:

(i) child care center licensed under IC 12-17.2-4;
(ii) child care home licensed under IC 12-17.2-5; or
(iii) child care ministry registered under IC 12-17.2-6;
that meets the standards of quality recognized by a Level 3 or Level 4 paths to QUALITY program rating;
(B) a public school, including a charter school; or
(C) a nonpublic school that is accredited by the state board of education or a national or regional accreditation agency that is recognized by the state board of education.

(2) The provider:

- (A) provides child care or educational services to an eligible child; and
- (B) complies with Indiana bright start program rules established by the office.

Sec. 5. As used in this chapter, the "Indiana bright start fund" refers to the Indiana bright start fund established by section 10 of this chapter.

Sec. 6. As used in this chapter, the "Indiana bright start program" refers to the Indiana bright start program established by section 9 of this chapter.

Sec. 7. As used in this chapter, "office" means the office of the secretary of family and social services.

Sec. 8. As used in this chapter, "paths to QUALITY program" has the meaning set forth in IC 12-17.2-2-14.2(b).

Sec. 9. (a) The Indiana bright start program is established to support the early learning and child care needs of working families with eligible children.

(b) The office shall develop and implement the Indiana bright start program. The Indiana bright start program developed by the office shall prioritize grants as follows:

(1) To provide tuition assistance to an eligible child:



(A) less than three (3) years of age on August 1 of the state fiscal year for which a grant is sought under the Indiana bright start program; and

(B) who is a member of a family with a household income that does not exceed eighty-five percent (85%) of Indiana's state median income for the household's family size.

(2) To provide tuition assistance to an eligible child:

(A) between four (4) years of age and five (5) years of age on August 1 of the state fiscal year for which a grant is sought under the Indiana bright start program; and

(B) who is a member of a family with a household income that does not exceed eighty-five percent (85%) of Indiana's state median income for the household's family size.

(3) To provide tuition assistance to an eligible child who is a member of a household with an income that exceeds eighty-five percent (85%) of Indiana's state median income for the household's family size.

(4) To provide grants to eligible providers located in communities with demonstrated scarcity of child care and prekindergarten programs, as determined by the office, to increase capacity for eligible children and to support quality improvement initiatives aligned with the paths to **QUALITY** program.

Sec. 10. (a) The Indiana bright start fund is established to:

(1) provide tuition assistance to eligible children;

(2) provide expansion and quality improvement grants to eligible providers; and

(3) pay accepted intermediaries for facilitating the Indiana bright start program.

(b) The fund consists of:

(1) appropriations made by the general assembly;

(2) subject to available funding, money available to the office;

**(3) gifts, grants, don
or private sources:**

(4) any federal grants that are received to capitalize or supplement the fund; and

(5) interest deposited in the fund under subsection (e)

(c) The office shall administer the fund.

d) The expenses of administering the fund shall be paid from money in the fund.

(e) The treasurer of state shall invest the money in the fund not currently needed to meet the obligations of the fund in the same



1 manner as other public funds may be invested. Interest that
2 accrues from these investments shall be deposited in the fund.

3 (f) Money in the fund at the end of a state fiscal year does not
4 revert to the state general fund.

5 Sec. 11. (a) The office may enter into agreements with nonprofit
6 corporations to facilitate the Indiana bright start program as
7 accepted intermediaries.

8 (b) The office shall disburse funds to an accepted intermediary
9 in a manner determined by the office for the purposes of the
10 Indiana bright start program.

11 Sec. 12. Beginning October 1, 2027, and each October 1
12 thereafter, the office shall:

13 (1) collect and compile information concerning the Indiana
14 bright start program under this chapter; and

15 (2) submit the report described in subdivision (1) to the
16 following:

17 (A) The governor.

18 (B) The legislative council, in an electronic format under
19 IC 5-14-6.

20 Sec. 13. The office may adopt rules under IC 4-22-2 to
21 implement this chapter.

