



SENATE BILL 257: 2026 Appropriations Act, Sec. 9D.6: Smart Start Initiatives

2025-2026 General Assembly

Analysis of: S.L. 2026-41, Sec. 9D.6

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Prepared by: Legislative Analysis
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Section 9D.6 of S.L. 2026-41 (Senate Bill 257) does the following regarding the North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc. (Partnership for Children):

- Ensures funded activities include assisting child care facilities with improving quality and implementing prekindergarten programs. Funding must also be used for evidence-based or evidence-informed programs that follow specified goals for children from birth to 5 years of age.
- Directs administrative costs must be equivalent to, on an average statewide basis for all local partnerships, not more than 10% of the total statewide allocation to all local partnerships and requires participation in a single statewide contract management system.
- Sets salary maximums and provides salary schedule criteria for the Executive Director of the Partnership for Children and the directors of the local partnerships.
- Requires the application of set match percentages to the total budgeted amount for program in the 2026-2027 fiscal year, establishes requirements to meet the private match, and creates a reduction in funds for failure to obtain the required match.
- Creates a prescribed competitive bidding process based on the amount of the bid.
- Prevents the reduction of the allocation below the 2012-2013 funding level for counties with less than 35,000 in population.
- Requires the Department of Health and Human Services to continue to implement the performance-based evaluation system.
- Ensures the allocation of funds for Early Childhood Education and Development Initiatives for 2026-2027 are administered and distributed in a specified manner.
- Allows up to 1% of State funds to be used for fundraising activities and requires the amount of State funds used for fundraising activities to be included in its annual report.

This section became effective July 1, 2026.

Kara McCraw
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