

HB 2379 -- EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

SPONSOR: Williams

This bill provides that current law relating to the distribution of sales tax proceeds in St. Louis County must not apply to a tax for the purpose of funding early childhood educational services, and requires that the proceeds must be deposited in the county's "Early Childhood Education Fund", which is created by the bill.

The bill also allows the proceeds of any tax imposed for the purposes of improving the quality, affordability, and access to early childhood development programs for children aged five years and younger to be deposited into the county or city Early Childhood Education Fund. The administrative control and management of such funds must be by the board of directors responsible for the administration of a city or county community children's services fund.

The board of directors must use or disburse the funds in the Early Childhood Education Fund to provide and administer programs subsidizing the cost of providing early childhood education, prioritizing children in financial need. The funds may also be used for early education and care provided by public, private, not-for-profit, and for-profit entities licensed, license-exempt, or registered by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, including preschools, childcare centers, nursery schools, local education agencies, Head Start and Early Head Start programs, informal childcare providers and independent and system-affiliated family child care homes, as specified in the bill.

This bill provides that the board of directors may contract with organizations to provide services, set eligibility rules for the use of the fund, audit funded entities, and accept gifts, grants, and property for the purpose of early childhood programs.