
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Carol Liu, Chair
2015 - 2016 Regular

Bill No: AB 47
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Version: July 2, 2015
Urgency: No
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Fiscal: Yes

Subject: State preschool program

SUMMARY

This bill requires by January 1, 2017, all eligible children that qualify for the State Preschool Program, to have access to the program the year before they enter kindergarten if their parents wish to enroll them, contingent upon the appropriation of sufficient funding in the annual Budget Act for this purpose.

BACKGROUND

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the California State Preschool Program for purposes of providing part-day and full-day developmentally appropriate programs designed to facilitate the transition to kindergarten for three- and four-year old children in educational development, health services, social services, nutritional services, parent education and participation, evaluation, and staff development. (Education Code § 8235)
- 2) Provides that three- and four-year old children are eligible for State Preschool if the family meets one of the following:
 - a) Current CalWORKs recipient.
 - b) Income eligible.
 - c) Children are recipients of protective services (abused, neglected, exploited or at risk of being abused, neglected or exploited). (EC § 8235)
- 3) Provides that three- and four-year olds are eligible for wraparound child care services to supplement part-day State Preschool if the family is eligible for State Preschool and the parents need care for at least one of the following reasons:
 - a) The child is a recipient of protective services, or at risk.
 - b) The parents are engaged in vocational training, as specified, employed or seeking employment, seeking permanent housing, or are incapacitated. (EC § 8239)
- 4) Defines “transitional kindergarten” as the first year of a two-year kindergarten program that uses a modified kindergarten curriculum that is age and developmentally appropriate. (EC § 48000(d))

ANALYSIS

- 1) This bill requires by January 1, 2017, all eligible children who do not have access to transitional kindergarten or the federal Head Start, to have access to the State Preschool program the year before they enter kindergarten if their parents wish to enroll them, contingent upon the appropriation of sufficient funding in the annual Budget Act for this purpose.
- 2) Declares legislative intent that all low-income children have access to either state preschool or transitional kindergarten and funds provided for this purpose should be used to expand full-day, full-year preschool for all eligible low-income children who otherwise would not be served.
- 3) States legislative findings and declarations relative to improving school readiness and performance through high-quality preschool and the value of the state's investment into high-quality preschool programs.

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) ***Need for the bill.*** According to research provided by the author, early intervention in a child's education increases cognitive, language, social and emotional development and investing in quality, early education is highly effective in promoting student academic success. The author contends that despite the state's commitment in the 2014–15 Budget Act to fund early childhood learning and child development, the California Department of Education received over 32,000 applications for state preschool and was unable to meet the demand. This bill seeks to expand the state preschool for all eligible low-income families.
- 2) ***Existing programs for 3- and 4- year olds.*** The State Preschool program provides both part-day and full-day services that offer age and developmentally appropriate curriculum to children. The program prioritizes four-year-olds for enrollment and may serve three-year-olds if space is available after enrolling all eligible four-year-olds. The State Preschool program also provides meals and snacks to children, parent education, referrals to health and social services for families, and staff development opportunities to employees. The program is administered through local educational agencies (LEAs), colleges, community-action agencies, and private nonprofit agencies. State Preschool can be offered at a child care center, a family child care network home, a school district, or a county office of education. LEAs provide preschool programs serving approximately two-thirds of all children enrolled in State Preschool. While not all school districts offer State Preschool, most school districts offer transitional kindergarten to some four-year-olds.

Transitional kindergarten currently serves "older" four-year-olds and "young" five-year-olds who have their fifth birthday after the cut-off date for kindergarten (between October 2 and December 2 for the current school year, and between September 2 and December 2 beginning with the 2014–15 school year). Eligibility for transitional kindergarten is limited to this cohort of students because they would have been eligible for kindergarten under the previous entry-age.

Head Start and Early Head Start programs support children from birth to age 5, in centers, child care partner locations, and in their own homes. Three- and four-year-old preschoolers made up over 80 percent of the children served by Head Start last year. Early Head Start services are provided for at least six hours per day and Head Start preschool services may be half-day or full-day. Like State Preschool, Head Start provides wraparound services that include early learning, health, and family well-being. Head Start programs prioritize enrollment for children in foster care, children with disabilities, and children whose families are homeless. California's Head Start program is the largest in the nation and is administered through a system of 74 grantees and 88 delegate agencies. The majority of these agencies also have contracts with California Department of Education, to administer general child care and/or State Preschool programs. Many of the programs are located at the same site.

This bill seeks to strengthen the state's commitment to ensure that children have access to preschool by providing preschool to low-income families a year before enrolling in kindergarten who are not served by Transitional Kindergarten, federal Head Start, or State Preschool programs. This bill does not appropriate funds for this purpose but makes the expansion of preschool to all eligible children contingent upon the appropriation of sufficient funding in the annual budget act. This bill does not mandate preschool rather it attempts to provide a space for those children whose parents wish to enroll them.

- 3) **Full day.** This bill expresses legislative intent for funding for preschool to be used to provide services for eligible children, including augmenting State Preschool to provide full-day, full-year learning for participants.
- 4) **Related Budget Activity.** The 2015 Budget Act restores funding for 7,030 full-day preschool slots effective January 1, 2016, of which 5,830 are for local education agencies (LEAs) and 1,200 are for non-LEA providers. The estimated cost for these slots is \$34.3 million (\$30.9 million Proposition 98). Finally, the budget agreement includes \$12.1 million in Proposition 98 funds for 2,500 additional part-day preschool slots.

SUPPORT

Advancement Project
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Butte County Office of Education
Children Now
Early Edge California
Fight Crime Invest in Kids California
Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce
Los Angeles Universal Preschool
Lutheran Office of Public Policy California
Santa Clara County Office of Education

OPPOSITION

None received on this version.

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