

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2010 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 350  
Ways and Means

(Delegate Hucker, *et al.*)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

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Education - Early Learning Challenge Fund - Application for Grants

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This bill requires the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to seek federal funds for early learning initiatives by submitting a grant application for the Early Learning Challenge Fund.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2010, contingent on federal legislation enacting the Early Learning Challenge Fund. If the federal legislation does not become effective before October 1, 2010, the bill terminates on that date.

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** None. MSDE has begun preparing the State's grant application using existing personnel and resources. Any effect on federal fund revenues and expenditures depends on the federal legislation and the grant terms established by the U.S. Department of Education.

**Local Effect:** None. The effect on local school systems depends on the federal legislation and the grant terms established by the U.S. Department of Education.

**Small Business Effect:** None. The effect on small business child care providers depends on the federal legislation and the grant terms established by the U.S. Department of Education.

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Analysis

**Bill Summary:** Before submitting an application, MSDE must identify the conditions necessary for a competitive application and identify actions necessary to remove

impediments. The application must include all of the information required and may include:

- early learning standards reforms;
- evidence-based program quality standards;
- enhanced program review and monitoring of program quality;
- comprehensive professional development;
- a coordinated system for facilitating screenings for disability, health, and mental health needs;
- improved support to parents;
- a process for assessing children's school readiness; and
- the use of data to improve child learning outcomes.

**Background:** A federal bill introduced in July 2009 would establish an Early Learning Challenge Fund, which would provide competitive grants to improve the quality of early learning settings for children from birth to age five. To receive grant funding under the proposed federal legislation, states will compete to establish model systems of early learning that:

- drive results-oriented, standards reform;
- fund and implement pathways to improve existing early learning programs, with the goal of increasing the number of low-income young children who participate in higher-quality programs; and
- ensure that more children enter kindergarten ready to succeed.

The initiative would establish two types of competitive grants: (1) quality pathways grants for states that have made significant progress in improving the quality of early learning settings and desire to expand their programs; and (2) development grants for states that show promise for strengthening and expanding their early learning system but need additional assistance to launch a standards-based, outcomes-driven system. The federal bill has passed the House of Representatives, and has been referred to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

MSDE reports it has already begun the process of preparing its application for the Early Learning Challenge Fund.

## Additional Information

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** SB 758 (Senator King, *et al.*) – Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland State Department of Education, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - March 8, 2010  
mlm/mwc

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