

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2005 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 1491
Ways and Means

(Delegate Marriott, *et al.*)

Education, Health, and Environmental
Affairs

State Department of Education - Early Learning and Child Care Programs

This bill requires the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to develop a plan for the accreditation of all existing early learning programs and child care programs that are providing or are planning to provide full-day kindergarten classes or publicly-funded prekindergarten programs for low-income four-year old children. The plan must include an estimated cost and an implementation timetable. MSDE must present the plan to the Joint Committee for Children, Youth, and Families by December 31, 2005. In addition, MSDE must develop a model contract for local school systems to use when they partner with early learning and child care providers.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2005.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. MSDE is already engaged in the activities the bill requires.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: By the 2007-2008 school year, all local school systems are required to provide full-day kindergarten to all students and offer prekindergarten to economically disadvantaged four-year old children. School systems may use alternative early learning

and child care providers to meet these requirements. Each school system's comprehensive master plan must include the strategies the school system will use to ensure that the required programs are implemented by the 2007-2008 school year.

Background: In appreciation of the growing body of research that demonstrates the positive impact of early childhood educational experiences, the Commission on Education, Finance, Equity, and Excellence (Thornton Commission) recommended that full-day kindergarten programs be provided for all students and that prekindergarten programs be available to all disadvantaged four-year old children. These recommendations were codified in the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act of 2002, and local school systems are required to provide the services by the 2007-2008 school year. Increased formula funding under the Act is tied to these mandates. Funding for full-day kindergarten is provided through an increase (from 0.5 to 1.0) in the kindergarten full-time equivalent rate used to calculate State aid. Funding for prekindergarten is provided through the compensatory education formula. State aid formulas enacted in the Bridge to Excellence legislation are scheduled to reach their full funding levels by fiscal 2008, when the mandates go into effect.

MSDE advises that it is currently preparing a *Guide to Contracting with Qualified Vendors: Prekindergarten and Full-day Kindergarten*. MSDE expects the guide to be available to local school systems in April 2005 with guidelines for completing the 2005 comprehensive master plan update.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

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

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 21, 2005
n/rhh

Analysis by: Mark W. Collins

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510