

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2005 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 739
Ways and Means

(Delegate Bates)

Education - Full-Day Kindergarten and Prekindergarten Programs - Alternative Providers

This bill requires a local board of education to determine its capacity to provide the required kindergarten and prekindergarten programs each year, beginning with the August 15, 2006 update to the comprehensive master plan. If the local board's capacity is insufficient to meet the requirements that full-day kindergarten be provided to all students and prekindergarten be provided to all disadvantaged four-year old children, the county must contract with alternative early learning and child care providers to provide the services. A local board of education may only contract with a provider that is licensed by the Department of Human Resources and is accredited or commits to becoming accredited by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) or a national accrediting body recognized by MSDE prior to the beginning of the school year. By May 31 of each year, MSDE must provide the local boards that do not have sufficient capacity with an inventory of the alternative early learning and child care providers in the county.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. MSDE already takes inventory of alternative early learning and child care providers and will continue to do so with existing budgeted resources.

Local Effect: None. Local school systems have the authority to contract with alternative early learning and child care providers under current law and will be required to do so if other methods for meeting the kindergarten and prekindergarten requirements are not identified.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: All local school systems are required to provide full-day kindergarten to all students and offer prekindergarten to economically disadvantaged four-year old children by the 2007-2008 school year. Local school systems submit updates to their comprehensive master plans by August 15 of each year. Comprehensive master plans must include the strategies the local boards of education will use to ensure that the required programs are available 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.

Local Fiscal Effect: Local school systems are already required to include in their comprehensive master plan updates the strategies they will use to ensure that the Bridge to Excellence kindergarten and prekindergarten requirements are met. Furthermore, they have the authority to contract with licensed alternative providers to meet the requirements. It is anticipated that, under current law, alternative providers will be used by local school systems that are unable to meet the requirements through other means. The bill, therefore, would have no fiscal impact.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

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

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