

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2016 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

Senate Bill 369

(Senator Ferguson, *et al.*)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Ways and Means

Education - Prekindergarten Programs - Notification of Eligibility by Local
Departments of Social Services

This bill requires local departments of social services and local health departments to provide a parent or guardian who applies for economic services with an oral and written notice that their child may be eligible for publicly funded prekindergarten programs if the parent or guardian has a child who will be four years old on September 1 of the next academic year. The notice must include contact information for the enrollment office of the local school system and the Division of Early Childhood Development in the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE).

Annually by December 1, each local department of social services and local health department must report to the General Assembly on the number of parents who were given notification and subsequently enrolled their child in a publicly funded prekindergarten program.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2016.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The Department of Human Resources can meet the bill's requirements through local departments of social services using existing budgeted resources.

Local Effect: Local health departments can meet the bill's requirements using existing budgeted resources.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law/Background: Pursuant to Chapter 288 of 2002, each local school system must make publicly funded prekindergarten available to economically disadvantaged four-year-old children in the State. To qualify as economically disadvantaged, a child must be from a family whose income is at or below 185% of federal poverty guidelines. If vacancies remain after economically disadvantaged children have been enrolled, local school systems may make prekindergarten available to other children that exhibit a lack of readiness for school.

The State has since enhanced its efforts to provide access to prekindergarten. Chapter 2 of 2014 expanded prekindergarten services to additional eligible four-year-old children from families whose income is at or below 300% of federal poverty guidelines by establishing a competitive grant program to provide \$4.3 million to qualified public and private prekindergarten providers. According to MSDE, 52,908 four-year-old children were enrolled in prekindergarten during the 2014-2015 school year.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 1095 (Delegate Platt, *et al.*)- Ways and Means.

Information Source(s): Department of Human Resources, Maryland Association of County Health Officers, Montgomery County, Maryland State Department of Education, Department of Legislative Services

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