

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2017 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 1130 (Delegates Platt and Moon)
Ways and Means

Education - Prekindergarten Programs - Online Registration

This bill requires county boards of education to allow a parent or guardian to register his or her child in a publicly funded prekindergarten program in person or online.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2017.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None.

Local Effect: Local expenditures increase, potentially significantly, for local school systems to establish online registration capabilities. **This bill imposes a mandate on a unit of local government.**

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law/Background: Chapter 288 of 2002, the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act, required each local school system to 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 provides funding to school systems to support the program through the State compensatory education formula.

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 funding to qualified public and private prekindergarten providers. Since fiscal 2015, the State budget has included \$4.3 million for the expansion program. In 2014, Maryland was also awarded a federal grant that provides \$15 million annually through fiscal 2019 to continue the expansion of public prekindergarten. In its grant application, the State committed to matching funds of \$3,672,000 in fiscal 2018 and \$7,344,000 in fiscal 2019 to provide access to high-quality prekindergarten to families with incomes *between 200% and 300%* of federal poverty guidelines. Pursuant to Chapters 683 and 684 of 2016, the Governor must include an appropriation in the budget for the amount that the State committed to fund as the State match to the federal grant in addition to the amount required under current law for the State Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Program. The proposed fiscal 2018 budget contains a total of \$16.0 million in federal funds and \$8.0 million in State funds to support public prekindergarten expansion.

According to data provided by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), there were approximately 31,100 public school prekindergarten students in the State during the 2015-2016 school year. According to MSDE, 52,908 four-year-old children were enrolled in prekindergarten (all types) during the 2014-2015 school year (the latest information readily available). Approximately half of the children were in public prekindergarten programs, with the remainder in private child care centers (40.9%) or family child care homes (8.8%).

Local Expenditures: Local school system expenditures increase, potentially significantly, for counties to implement and maintain online registration for prekindergarten. Of the counties responding to a request for information regarding the impact of this bill, only Queen Anne's County indicated that it already has an online platform for student registration, and thus there will be no additional costs. Montgomery County advises that it is unable to determine a fiscal impact at this time, as the costs of implementing an online application will be determined by the technological specifications of the online platform adopted. Harford County estimates costs of \$252,000 in fiscal 2018 (which includes initial staff training costs) and approximately \$100,000 annually thereafter. Carroll County estimates costs of at least \$33,000 in fiscal 2018 and \$5,500 annually thereafter.

Additional Comments: MSDE notes that school systems may have local policies requiring prekindergarten to be completed in person, as parents or guardians registering their child may need to provide documentation required for registration, such as birth certificates and health records. Individuals requesting to be eligible for free prekindergarten also need to provide documentation of income eligibility. However, the Department of Legislative Services advises that an online platform could allow for such

documents to be uploaded, or alternatively the documents could be mailed to the school system.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Carroll, Harford, Montgomery, and Queen Anne's counties; Maryland State Department of Education; Department of Legislative Services

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