
**Children & Family Services
Committee**

SB 5621

Brief Description: Requiring the superintendent of public instruction to adopt standards for voluntary certification of preschools.

Sponsors: Senators McAuliffe, Weinstein, Pridemore, Rockefeller, Kohl-Welles and Rasmussen.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction to adopt standards and procedures for the voluntary certification of preschools.

Hearing Date: March 24, 2005.

Staff: Cynthia Forland (786-7152).

Background:

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) is required to license agencies providing care for children outside of their homes as identified by state law. The purpose of this licensing requirement is to assure the users of those agencies, their parents, the community at large, and the agencies themselves that adequate minimum standards are maintained by all agencies caring for children in order to safeguard the health, safety, and well-being of those children receiving care.

State law specifically exempts nursery schools or kindergartens, which are engaged primarily in educational work with preschool children and in which no child is enrolled on a regular basis for more than four hours per day, from the licensing requirement.

State law requires the State Board of Education to approve private schools carrying out a program for any or all of the grades kindergarten through 12, except that no private school may be approved that operates a kindergarten program only.

Summary of Bill:

By rule, the Superintendent of Public Instruction (Superintendent) is required to adopt standards and procedures for the voluntary certification of public and nonpublic preschool child development and educational programs. At a minimum, the standards should outline essential components, including, but not limited to, the following categories:

- school-home relationships;

- class size and teacher-student ratios;
- standards for teachers and staff;
- specification of pedagogical goals, content, and methods, consistent with early learning development benchmarks developed in Washington; and
- methods for monitoring quality.

The Superintendent is required to develop programs to encourage preschool programs to apply for approval.

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction is required to post a list of certified preschool programs on its web site.

Any program that meets the definition in state law of a nursery school or kindergarten, and is thereby exempt from licensing by the DSHS under state law, is required to annually file its business name, name of the business owner, address, and phone number with the Superintendent.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.