
Children, Youth & Families Committee

HB 1451

Brief Description: Concerning the entitlement date and definition for the early childhood education and assistance program.

Sponsors: Representatives Sullivan, Lekanoff and Thai; by request of Office of Financial Management.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Delays the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) entitlement from the 2022-23 school year to the 2026-27 school year.
- Requires the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) to submit a report to the Governor and the Legislature with an implementation plan to meet the ECEAP entitlement by September 2, 2022.
- Requires the DCYF to adopt rules outlining the requirements related to educational activities and comprehensive services required to meet the ECEAP entitlement requirement by January 1, 2023.

Hearing Date: 2/8/21

Staff: Lena Brodsky (786-7192).

Background:

The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program.

The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) is the state's voluntary preschool program. In the 2022-23 school year, the ECEAP will become an entitlement for eligible children. The term "eligible child" means a child who:

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- has a family income at or below 110 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL), which is \$24,156 for a family of three;
- is eligible for special education preschool due to disability; and
- may include children who are eligible under rules adopted by the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) if the number of such children equals not more than 10 percent of the total enrollment.

The DCYF rules allow children who do not meet the definition of "eligible child" to enroll in the ECEAP, as space is available, if the family income is:

- above 110 percent of the FPL but less than 130 percent of the FPL; or
- above 130 percent of the FPL but less than 200 percent of the FPL if the child meets at least one of the specified risk factors.

Summary of Bill:

The ECEAP entitlement is delayed from the 2022-23 school year to the 2026-27 school year.

By January 1, 2023, the DCYF must adopt rules outlining the requirements related to educational activities and comprehensive services required to meet the ECEAP entitlement requirement. The ECEAP entitlement is specified to be voluntary enrollment in a full day program.

By September 1, 2022, the DCYF must submit a report to the Governor and the Legislature with an implementation plan to meet the ECEAP entitlement. The plan must include:

- details for how all eligible children entitled to the program will access a full day program by the 2026-27 school year;
- a description of how the ECEAP and transitional kindergarten funding streams may be combined to create high-quality integrated preschool classrooms;
- combinations of other existing program funding streams that serve 3- and 4-year-old children, federally or state-funded, including:
 - the Working Connections Child Care program subsidy;
 - the Early Head Start program;
 - developmental preschool programs;
 - services under the Early Childhood Intervention and Prevention Services program;
 - local government funded preschool programs; and
 - Title I.
- a description of how combined funding streams can build high-quality, inclusive preschool programs that can be delivered in a variety of public or private settings;
- an outline of how the DCYF will maintain or increase program workforce diversity and maintain an emphasis on eliminating racial and ethnic disproportionality and disparities in early childhood education;
- a description of future program resource needs, costs, and various phase-in timelines by state geographic location;
- estimates of unmet need by geographic location, by age and type of program;
- cost and recommended timelines to convert part day programs to full day programs;

- identification of the need for and a phase-in approach to providing voluntary summer school options;
- recommendations for income eligibility; and
- a tool kit to be made available on the DCYF's website for potential preschool program operators to implement a high-quality, inclusive preschool program.

The definition of "full day program" is changed to mean an ECEAP program that offers early learning education for a minimum of 1,000 instructional hours per year. The term "instructional hours" is defined as hours children are provided the opportunity to engage in educational activities planned by and under the direction of staff in approved programs, inclusive of intermissions for class changes, recess, and teacher/parent-guardian conferences that are planned and scheduled by the approved program for the purpose of discussing students' educational needs or progress, and time spent for meals or rest.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 3, 2021.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed, except for section 1, which takes effect on September 1, 2026.