

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2020 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
 First Reader

House Bill 1255 (Delegate Cain, *et al.*)
 Ways and Means

Education – Bilingual Learner Prekindergarten Grant Program

This bill establishes the Bilingual Learner Prekindergarten Grant Program to provide local boards of education with grants to assist in creating pilot programs to, among other purposes, develop and implement best practices for supporting English language learners in prekindergarten and their families. Beginning in fiscal 2022, the Governor must include \$1.0 million annually in the State budget for the program. By December 1, 2022, and annually thereafter, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) must submit a report evaluating the program to the General Assembly. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2020.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase by \$1.0 million annually beginning in FY 2022. Revenues are not affected. **This bill establishes a mandated appropriation beginning in FY 2022.**

(\$ in millions)	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Net Effect	\$0.0	(\$1.0)	(\$1.0)	(\$1.0)	(\$1.0)

Note:() = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate increase; (-) = indeterminate decrease

Local Effect: Local school system expenditures and revenues may increase, reflecting grant funding and additional support for pilot programs. In total, \$1.0 million annually is available for local grants beginning in FY 2022.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The purpose of the program is to provide local boards of education with grants to assist in creating pilot programs to (1) facilitate bilingual education for prekindergarten students; (2) develop and implement best practices for supporting English language learners in prekindergarten and their families; (3) ensure that prekindergarten instructors are trained in bilingual education or are certified in English for speakers of other languages; (4) communicate with the parents and guardians of English language learners in their home language; and (5) screen and assess prekindergarten students in their home language to improve the accuracy of assessments of students' work.

MSDE may adopt regulations as necessary to implement the program.

By December 1, 2022, and annually thereafter, MSDE must submit a report to the General Assembly evaluating the program. The report must include (1) an assessment of whether the program has improved student kindergarten readiness, as measured by the kindergarten readiness assessment, and (2) recommendations for expanding the program.

Current Law/Background: Each local board of education must take reasonable steps to provide equal access to public services for individuals with limited English proficiency. Reasonable steps include the provision of oral language services for parents and guardians with limited English proficiency, which must be through face-to-face, in-house oral language services if in-person contact is at least on a weekly basis. MSDE advises that current research indicates numerous benefits of dual language instruction in a child's early years, including improved readiness for kindergarten and increased academic success.

In all jurisdictions, local school systems are required to provide publicly funded half-day prekindergarten to four-year-old children from families with incomes at or below 185% of the federal poverty level (FPL). Jurisdictions also provide prekindergarten services for three- and five-year-old students.

Chapter 2 of 2015 established the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Program, which offers competitive grants to qualified public and private prekindergarten providers to serve four-year-olds from families with incomes at or below 300% FPL. The grants also allow programs to improve existing slots by converting half-day slots to full-day slots, limiting class sizes, and providing professional development among other efforts. Beginning in 2015, enrollment includes publicly funded slots in private programs. In 2020, 927 children were served in publicly funded slots in private programs, compared to 421 in 2015. Chapters 6 and 607 of 2017 further increased State funding for prekindergarten by providing supplemental grants to local school systems in which all prekindergarten students were provided full-day prekindergarten (Baltimore City and Garrett, Kent, and Somerset counties received these grants) for fiscal 2018 through 2020. The Governor's

proposed fiscal 2021 budget includes \$29.6 million in special and federal funds for the Prekindergarten Expansion Program Financing Fund.

State/Local Fiscal Effect: MSDE can use existing resources to review applications for program funding to ensure that they include evidence-based practices and to prepare the required annual report.

The bill does not require local school systems to create pilot programs. To the extent local school systems apply for grants to create pilot programs, local school system expenditures correspond with any grant revenues. Local expenditures may increase further to provide additional support to any pilot program created; however, any such impact is at the option of the local school system. In total, \$1.0 million annually beginning in fiscal 2022 is available for local grants due to the bill's mandated appropriation.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education; Department of Budget and Management; Baltimore City Public Schools; Baltimore County Public Schools; Montgomery County Public Schools; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 6, 2020
mm/rhh

Analysis by: Jennifer K. Botts

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510