

Summary of HR 3289, the Providing Resources Early for Kids Act of 2008

The Providing Resources Early for Kids Act of 2008 (“PRE-K Act”), sponsored by Representative Mazie Hirono (D-HI), seeks to strengthen the quality of state-funded prekindergarten programs. The bill authorizes \$500 million per year for fiscal years 2008 to 2013 for the Secretary of Education, in consultation with the Secretary of Health and Human Services, to award grants, to states, tribes and tribal organizations to enhance or improve state-funded prekindergarten programs.

States that wish to receive funds must apply to the Secretary of Education. In developing their application, the states must consult with the state Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care or similar agency, and providers of early childhood programs operating in the state. There are two categories of states that can receive funds:

- **Qualified States** must:
 - Carry out a state-funded preschool program that requires programs to:
 - Use research-based curricula that are aligned with state early learning standards that are developmentally appropriate and include, at a minimum: language development, literacy, mathematics, science, creative arts, social and emotional development, approaches to learning, and physical and health development.
 - Follow nationally established best practices for group size and teacher-to-student ratios.
 - Require that each teacher hold an associate degree, or higher, in early childhood education or a related field.
 - Operate for at least the length of an academic year.
 - Have a plan for moving toward a requirement for state-funded prekindergarten programs that each teacher holds a B.A. in early childhood education within 5 years of receiving their grant.
 - Ensure that the average per child expenditures are greater than or equal to the average per child expenditures for the previous two fiscal years.
 - Ensure that the total state-funded preschool program and child care expenditures are equal to or greater than the total state-funded preschool program and child care expenditures for the previous fiscal year.
 - Provide a 50 percent match of federal funds.
- **Selected States** must:
 - Ensure that the average per child expenditures are greater than or equal to the average per child expenditures for the previous two fiscal years.
 - Ensure that the total state-funded preschool program and child care expenditures are equal to or greater than the total state-funded preschool program and child care expenditures for the previous fiscal year.
 - Demonstrate that, if selected, the state will become a qualified state within 2 years of receiving the grant.
 - Provide a 30 percent match

States must demonstrate that they meet the requirements for either a qualified or selected state, and designate a state agency to administer the grant. All states must provide:

- A description of how the funds received will be used to enhance or improve prekindergarten programs in the state.
- A description of how the state is working to build its capacity to serve more children in high quality early education programs, including the building of new facilities.
- A description of how the state will ensure that any funds made available to preschool providers are made available to a range of preschool providers, including local educational agencies and community based providers such as child care and Head Start.
- Assurances that amounts received by the state will be used only to supplement, and not supplant, federal, state and local funds otherwise available to support existing early childhood services and activities.
- A description of how the state will evaluate the effectiveness of the use of these funds.
- A description of how the state will use the funds to better meet the needs of low-income working parents.
- A description of how the use of funds will help meet the developmental needs of children in the state.
- A description of how the state will ensure that state-funded preschool programs are available to and appropriate for child with disabilities.
- A description of how the state-funded preschool programs will be culturally and linguistically appropriate and how the state plans to meet the early education need of children with limited English proficiency.
- A description of how the state is working to develop and use research-based curricula that are aligned with state early learning standards and are linguistically and culturally appropriate for children with limited English proficiency.
- A description of how the state agency will coordinate with other state agencies delivering early childhood development programs or services.
- A description of how the state will ensure that state-funded preschool programs will coordinate with local educational agencies to ensure a smooth and successful transition to kindergarten.
- A description of how the state monitoring process will effectively assess and ensure program quality of state-funded preschool programs.
- A description of how the state will coordinate this grant with the efforts of the state early learning council or other state entity that is coordinating a system of early childhood development and education birth to kindergarten.
- A description of how the state-funded preschool programs prioritize children from low-income families.
- A description of how the state is working to address the transportation needs of families for whom transportation is a significant barrier to accessing state-funded preschool.

- A description of how the state is working to eliminate barriers and improve access to state-funded preschool programs for children who live in rural areas.

A state may use funds for any of the following activities:

- To increase the number of teachers and program directors in state-funded preschool programs who hold a baccalaureate degree in early childhood education, or in a related field if specialized training in early childhood education has also been completed.
- To increase the number of teacher aides in state-funded preschool programs who hold an associate degree in early childhood education, or in a related field if specialized training in early childhood education has also been completed.
- To increase the number of program directors, teachers and teacher aides who have specialized training in working with children and families with limited English proficiency.
- To increase the number of program directors, teachers and teacher aides who have specialized training in working with children with disabilities.
- To increase the compensation or benefits provided to teachers, program directors, and teacher aides in state-funded preschool programs.
- To decrease group size in state-funded preschool programs.
- To improve the teacher-to-student ratio in classrooms in state-funded preschool programs.
- To provide one or more comprehensive services that support healthy child development and positive child outcomes and school readiness.
- To increase the number of program hours per day.
- To increase the number of program days per week.
- To increase the number of program weeks per year.
- To improve the state's system for monitoring quality.
- To provide opportunities for intensive and on-going research- and evidence-based professional development.
- To provide induction and support for preschool program directors, teachers, and staff during their first three years on employment in a new position, and to provide ongoing mentoring to such individuals by persons with education and expertise in supporting teachers in effective teaching practices with young children and in supporting program directors in early childhood education and program management.
- To renovate existing facilities (limited to minor rehabilitation or remodeling needed to ensure that facilities are age- and developmentally-appropriate).

States must use ten percent of funds received to improve the early learning environments for children from birth to age three through research- and evidence-based methods.

In addition, when total funding reaches \$250 million, a qualified state may use up to 50 percent of their funds to increase the number of children participating in preschool programs that prioritize low-income communities (unless the state is already serving all of these communities). They may also use funding to increase the number of participating children as long as their state-funded preschool program:

- Meets the standards for a qualified state.
- Requires that each teacher holds a baccalaureate degree in early childhood education or a related field if specialized training in early childhood education has also been completed.
- Requires that each program provides full-day services at all locations.
- Requires that each program provides comprehensive services to at-risk children participating in the state-funded preschool program.
- Requires that each teacher participates in on-going professional development in child development and learning.
- Each program provides linguistically and culturally appropriate standards for serving children with limited English proficiency participating in the state-funded preschool program.

For each year in which funding is provided, the Secretary of Education must submit an annual report to Congress on the activities carried out as a result of the funding, including, at a minimum:

- The activities undertaken by qualified states and select states that improved or enhanced state-funded preschool programs
- The program of select states in moving toward becoming qualified states.
- The extent to which the states used funds to expand their state-funded preschool programs.
- The costs and barriers to expansion.

Each state that receives funding must submit an annual report to the Secretary of Education on the following:

- How the funds were used to enhance and improve the quality of state-funded preschool programs in the state, including enhancing and improving the quality of state-funded preschool programs serving children who live in rural areas.
- The number of and ages of children served by the state-funded preschool program.
- The number and ages of children in state-funded preschool programs with a disability, with limited English proficiency, from low-income families and from rural areas.