

Compiled by the NJ State Law Library

LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ESTIMATE: Yes

A5717 (2R)

INTRODUCED BILL: (Includes sponsor(s) statement)	Yes	
REPRINT(S):	Yes	AED 6/16/25 1R AAP 6/19/25 2R
TECHNICAL REVIEW OF BILL:	No	
COMMITTEE STATEMENT:	ASSEMBLY:	Yes Education Appropriation
	SENATE:	No

(Audio archived recordings of the committee meetings, corresponding to the date of the committee statement, *may possibly* be found at www.njleg.state.nj.us)

FLOOR AMENDMENT STATEMENT:	No
LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ESTIMATE:	Yes
VETO MESSAGE:	No
GOVERNOR'S PRESS RELEASE ON SIGNING:	Yes
LEGISLATOR STATEMENT:	Yes

FOLLOWING WERE PRINTED:

To check for circulating copies, contact New Jersey State Government Publications at the State Library (609) 278-2640 ext.103 or <mailto:refdesk@njstatelib.org>

REPORTS:	No
HEARINGS:	No
NEWSPAPER ARTICLES:	Yes

Liz Rosenberg - For South Jersey Times, 'Murphy signs laws ending half-day kindergarten New Jersey's ambitious plan will also add 20,000 pre-K seats this year alone, saving some families significant childcare costs.', *South Jersey Times* (online), 12 Jul 2025 001 <<https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=NewsBank&docref=news/1A1C86DDB916B730>>

CL/MMcB

§§1,2,9,10
C.18A:44-7 to
18A:44-10
§§7,8
C.18A:44-11
& 18A:44-12
§6
C.18A:7F-54.1
§11
C.18A:3B-14.4
The following are
recodified:
C.18A:3B-14.2
(P.L.2012,
c.42, s.22
formerly
C.18A:3B-34.1)
C.18A:3B-14.3
(P.L.2018,
c.92, s.1
formerly
C.18A:3B-34.2)

P.L. 2025, CHAPTER 100, *approved July 9, 2025*
Senate Committee Substitute (*First Reprint*) for
Senate, No. 3910

1 **AN ACT** concerning early childhood education, amending various
2 parts of the statutory law, and supplementing P.L.2007, c.260
3 ¹and chapters 26 and 44 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes¹.
4
5 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
6 of New Jersey:
7
8 1. (New section) Sections 1 and 2 ¹**[,]** and¹ 6 through ¹**[12, and**
9 **15]** 11¹ of this act shall be known and may be cited as the “New
10 Jersey Universal Preschool and Kindergarten Act.”
11
12 2. (New section) The Legislature finds and declares that:
13 a. Research is clear that high-quality preschool can change the
14 educational trajectories of young children, particularly
15 economically disadvantaged children and multilingual learners.
16 Improvements in literacy, numeracy, social-emotional and self-
17 regulatory development, and lifetime earnings have been
18 demonstrated among individuals who attend high-quality preschool
19 compared to their peers.

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets **[thus]** in the above bill is
not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.
Matter enclosed in superscript numerals has been adopted as follows:
¹ Senate SBA committee amendments adopted June 26, 2025.

1 b. New Jersey leads the nation in expanding access to high-
2 quality preschool opportunities. The State has achieved a unique
3 and world-class combination of significant financial investment and
4 rigorous quality standards. New Jersey State-funded preschools are
5 required to serve three- and four-year olds in full-day programs
6 featuring small class sizes led by quality instructors with ample
7 curriculum support, professional development, and accommodations
8 for students with special needs. New Jersey's State spending on
9 preschool is among the highest in the country, with clear,
10 significant impacts on our public school system: tens of thousands
11 of three- and four-year olds in hundreds of communities around the
12 State attend transformative high-quality early education programs.

13 c. District-operated preschool programs, licensed childcare
14 centers, and Head Start programs form an interrelated and
15 interdependent early childhood ecosystem. Each component is made
16 stronger by the other, and the system is greater and more impactful
17 than the sum of its parts. No component can reach its full potential
18 without the facilities, staff, resources, and expertise of the others.
19 Together, the system represents a continuum of education and care
20 services from birth through age five necessary not only for children
21 to realize their full life potential, but for families to participate fully
22 in economic and civic society. To lift up this system is a moral and
23 economic imperative.

24 d. To build on the State's preschool expansion progress to date
25 and to realize the full benefits of high-quality preschool, it is fitting
26 and proper for the State to enshrine certain policies and values in
27 State law, including:

28 (1) providing sustainable, annual financial support for
29 expanding access to high-quality preschool;

30 (2) codifying preschool education aid provisions previously
31 implemented through language in various annual appropriations
32 acts and harmonizing New Jersey law accordingly;

33 (3) prioritizing expansion for economically disadvantaged
34 families and communities;

35 (4) requiring State-funded preschool programs to make every
36 effort to partner with local ready, willing, and able licensed
37 childcare providers and Head Start programs; and

38 (5) conducting ongoing evaluations of the State's approach to
39 early childhood and preschool education to ensure that policy
40 continues to reflect stakeholder expertise and evolving research.

41 e. In addition to high-quality preschool education, full-day
42 kindergarten is necessary not only to unlock a child's full learning
43 potential, but to facilitate a smooth transition from high-quality
44 preschool into elementary programs.

45

46 3. Section 3 of P.L.2007, c.62 (C.18A:7F-38) is amended to read
47 as follows:

1 3. a. Notwithstanding the provisions of any other law to the
2 contrary, a school district shall not adopt a budget pursuant to sections
3 5 and 6 of P.L.1996, c.138 (C.18A:7F-5 and 18A:7F-6) with an
4 increase in its adjusted tax levy that exceeds, except as provided in
5 subsection e. of section 4 of P.L.2007, c.62 (C.18A:7F-39), the tax
6 levy growth limitation calculated as follows: the sum of the prebudget
7 year adjusted tax levy and the adjustment for increases in enrollment
8 multiplied by 2.0 percent, and adjustments for an increase in health
9 care costs, increases in amounts for certain normal and accrued
10 liability pension contributions set forth in sections 1 and 2 of P.L.2009,
11 c.19 amending section 24 of P.L.1954, c.84 (C.43:15A-24) and section
12 15 of P.L.1944, c.255 (C.43:16A-15) for the year set forth in those
13 sections, **[and,]** in the case of an SDA district as defined pursuant to
14 section 3 of P.L.2000, c.72 (C.18A:7G-3), during the 2018-2019
15 through the 2024-2025 school years, increases to raise a general fund
16 tax levy to an amount that does not exceed its local share , and, in the
17 case of a school district first receiving preschool education aid in the
18 2025-2026, 2026-2027, or 2027-2028 school years and participating in
19 the pilot program established by the commissioner pursuant to
20 subsection h. of 'section' 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54),
21 increases to raise a general fund tax levy for the local share of
22 preschool education costs.

23 b. (1) The allowable adjustment for increases in enrollment
24 authorized pursuant to subsection a. of this section shall equal the per
25 pupil prebudget year adjusted tax levy multiplied by EP, where EP
26 equals the sum of:

27 (a) 0.50 for each unit of weighted resident enrollment that
28 constitutes an increase from the prebudget year over 1%, but not more
29 than 2.5%;

30 (b) 0.75 for each unit of weighted resident enrollment that
31 constitutes an increase from the prebudget year over 2.5%, but not
32 more than 4%; and

33 (c) 1.00 for each unit of weighted resident enrollment that
34 constitutes an increase from the prebudget year over 4%.

35 (2) A school district may request approval from the commissioner
36 to calculate EP equal to 1.00 for any increase in weighted resident
37 enrollment if it can demonstrate that the calculation pursuant to
38 paragraph (1) of this subsection would result in an average class size
39 that exceeds 10% above the facilities efficiency standards established
40 pursuant to P.L.2000, c.72 (C.18A:7G-1 et al.).

41 c. (Deleted by amendment, P.L.2010, c.44)

42 d. (1) The allowable adjustment for increases in health care costs
43 authorized pursuant to subsection a. of this section shall equal that
44 portion of the actual increase in total health care costs for the budget
45 year, less any withdrawals from the current expense emergency
46 reserve account for increases in total health care costs, that exceeds 2.0
47 percent of the total health care costs in the prebudget year, but that is
48 not in excess of the product of the total health care costs in the

1 prebudget year multiplied by the average percentage increase of the
2 State Health Benefits Program, P.L.1961, c.49 (C.52:14-17.25 et seq.),
3 as annually determined by the Division of Pensions and Benefits in the
4 Department of the Treasury.

5 (2) The allowable adjustment for increases in the amount of
6 normal and accrued liability pension contributions authorized pursuant
7 to subsection a. of this section shall equal that portion of the actual
8 increase in total normal and accrued liability pension contributions for
9 the budget year that exceeds 2.0 percent of the total normal and
10 accrued liability pension contributions in the prebudget year.

11 (3) In the case of an SDA district, as defined pursuant to section 3
12 of P.L.2000, c.72 (C.18A:7G-3), in which the prebudget year adjusted
13 tax levy is less than the school district's prebudget year local share as
14 calculated pursuant to section 10 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-52),
15 the allowable adjustment for increases to raise a tax levy that does not
16 exceed the school district's local share shall equal the difference
17 between the prebudget year adjusted tax levy and the prebudget year
18 local share.

19 (4) In the case of a school district first receiving preschool
20 education aid in the 2025-2026, 2026-2027, or 2027-2028 school years
21 and participating in the pilot program established by the commissioner
22 pursuant to subsection h. of 'section' 12 of P.L.2007, c.260
23 (C.18A:7F-54), the allowable adjustment for increases to raise a
24 general fund tax levy for the local share of preschool education costs
25 shall be equal to the actual increase required to provide preschool
26 education under the pilot program less State aid provided pursuant to
27 subsection h. of 'section' 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54).

28 A school district first receiving preschool education aid in the
29 2025-2026 school year and participating in the pilot program
30 established by the commissioner pursuant to subsection h. of 'section'
31 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54) may, prior to the delivery of tax
32 bills pursuant to R.S.54:4-64, recertify to the county board of taxation
33 the sum to be raised in the district during the ensuing school year if the
34 change in the amount to be raised is equal to the district's local share
35 of preschool education costs for that school year.

36 e. (Deleted by amendment, P.L.2010, c.44)

37 f. The adjusted tax levy shall be increased or decreased
38 accordingly whenever the responsibility and associated cost of a
39 school district activity is transferred to another school district or
40 governmental entity.
41 (cf: P.L.2018, c.67, s.6)

42
43 4. Section 3 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-45) is amended to
44 read as follows:

45 3. As used in **[this act]** P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-43 et al.)
46 and P.L.1996, c.138 (C.18A:7F-1 et al.), unless the context clearly
47 requires a different meaning:

1 "At-risk pupils" means those resident pupils from households
2 with a household income at or below the most recent federal
3 poverty guidelines available on October 15 of the prebudget year
4 multiplied by 1.85;

5 "Base per pupil amount" means the cost per elementary pupil of
6 delivering the core curriculum content standards and extracurricular
7 and cocurricular activities necessary for a thorough and efficient
8 education;

9 "Bilingual education pupil" means a resident pupil enrolled in a
10 program of bilingual education or in an English as a second
11 language program approved by the State Board of Education;

12 "Budgeted local share" means the district's local tax levy
13 contained in the budget certified for taxation purposes;

14 "Capital outlay" means capital outlay as defined in GAAP;

15 "Combination pupil" means a resident pupil who is both an at-
16 risk pupil and a bilingual education pupil;

17 "Commissioner" means the Commissioner of Education;

18 "Concentration of at-risk pupils" shall be based on prebudget
19 year pupil data and means, for a school district or a county
20 vocational school district, the number of at-risk pupils among those
21 counted in resident enrollment, divided by resident enrollment;

22 "County special services school district" means any entity
23 established pursuant to article 8 of chapter 46 of Title 18A of the
24 New Jersey Statutes;

25 "County vocational school district" means any entity established
26 pursuant to article 3 of chapter 54 of Title 18A of the New Jersey
27 Statutes;

28 "CPI" means the increase, expressed as a decimal, in the average
29 annualized consumer price index for the New York City and
30 Philadelphia areas in the fiscal year preceding the prebudget year
31 relative to the previous fiscal year as reported by the United States
32 Department of Labor;

33 "Debt service" means payments of principal and interest upon
34 school bonds and other obligations issued to finance the purchase or
35 construction of school facilities, additions to school facilities, or the
36 reconstruction, remodeling, alteration, modernization, renovation or
37 repair of school facilities, including furnishings, equipment,
38 architect fees, and the costs of issuance of such obligations and
39 shall include payments of principal and interest upon bonds
40 heretofore issued to fund or refund such obligations, and upon
41 municipal bonds and other obligations which the commissioner
42 approves as having been issued for such purposes;

43 "District income" means the aggregate income of the residents of
44 the taxing district or taxing districts, based upon data provided by
45 the Division of Taxation in the New Jersey Department of the
46 Treasury and contained on the New Jersey State Income Tax forms
47 for the calendar year ending two years prior to the prebudget year.
48 The commissioner may supplement data contained on the State

1 Income Tax forms with data available from other State or federal
2 agencies in order to better correlate the data to that collected on the
3 federal census. With respect to regional districts and their
4 constituent districts, however, the district income as described
5 above shall be allocated among the regional and constituent districts
6 in proportion to the number of pupils resident in each of them;

7 "Equalized valuation" means the equalized valuation of the
8 taxing district or taxing districts, as certified by the Director of the
9 Division of Taxation on October 1, or subsequently revised by the
10 tax court by January 15, of the prebudget year. With respect to
11 regional districts and their constituent districts, however, the
12 equalized valuations as described above shall be allocated among
13 the regional and constituent districts in proportion to the number of
14 pupils resident in each of them. In the event that the equalized table
15 certified by the director shall be revised by the tax court after
16 January 15 of the prebudget year, the revised valuations shall be
17 used in the recomputation of aid for an individual school district
18 filing an appeal, but shall have no effect upon the calculation of the
19 property value rate, Statewide average equalized school tax rate, or
20 Statewide equalized total tax rate;

21 "Full-day preschool" means a preschool day consisting of a
22 minimum six-hour comprehensive educational program in
23 accordance with the district's kindergarten through grade 12 school
24 calendar;

25 "GAAP" means the generally accepted accounting principles
26 established by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board as
27 prescribed by the State board pursuant to N.J.S.18A:4-14;

28 "General special education services pupil" means a pupil
29 receiving specific services pursuant to chapter 46 of Title 18A of
30 the New Jersey Statutes;

31 "Geographic cost adjustment" means an adjustment that reflects
32 county differences in the cost of providing educational services that
33 are outside the control of the district;

34 "Household income" means income as defined in 7 CFR ss.245.2
35 and 245.6 or any subsequent superseding federal law or regulation;

36 "Net budget" means the sum of the district's general fund tax
37 levy, State aid received pursuant to the provisions of this act other
38 than preschool education aid, miscellaneous revenue estimated
39 pursuant to GAAP, and designated general fund balance;

40 **["Prebudget year" means the school fiscal year preceding the**
41 **year in which the school budget is implemented;]**

42 "Nonpreschool ECPA" means the amount of early childhood
43 program aid, excluding prior year carry-forward amounts, included
44 in a district's 2007-2008 school year budget certified for taxes that
45 was allocated to grades K through 3;

46 "Prebudget year" means the school fiscal year preceding the year
47 in which the school budget is implemented;

1 “Preschool expansion grant” means any grant funded by a
2 portion of preschool education aid allocated by the Commissioner
3 of Education or any other State funds appropriated for the purpose
4 of expanding free access to high-quality preschool for resident
5 three- and four-year old children in districts that do not, at the time
6 of application for a grant, provide State-funded, high-quality, free
7 preschool programs;

8 "Report" means the Educational Adequacy Report issued by the
9 commissioner pursuant to section 4 of this act;

10 "Resident enrollment" means the number of pupils other than
11 preschool pupils, post-graduate pupils, and post-secondary
12 vocational pupils who, on the last school day prior to October 16 of
13 the current school year, are residents of the district and are enrolled
14 in: (1) the public schools of the district, excluding evening schools,
15 (2) another school district, other than a county vocational school
16 district in the same county on a full-time basis, or a State college
17 demonstration school or private school to which the district of
18 residence pays tuition, or (3) a State facility in which they are
19 placed by the district; or are residents of the district and are: (1)
20 receiving home instruction, or (2) in a shared-time vocational
21 program and are regularly attending a school in the district and a
22 county vocational school district. In addition, resident enrollment
23 shall include the number of pupils who, on the last school day prior
24 to October 16 of the prebudget year, are residents of the district and
25 in a State facility in which they were placed by the State. Pupils in
26 a shared-time vocational program shall be counted on an equated
27 full-time basis in accordance with procedures to be established by
28 the commissioner. Resident enrollment shall include regardless of
29 nonresidence, the enrolled children of teaching staff members of the
30 school district or county vocational school district who are
31 permitted, by contract or local district policy, to enroll their
32 children in the educational program of the school district or county
33 vocational school district without payment of tuition. Disabled
34 children between three and five years of age and receiving programs
35 and services pursuant to N.J.S.18A:46-6 shall be included in the
36 resident enrollment of the district;

37 "School district" means any local or regional school district
38 established pursuant to chapter 8 or chapter 13 of Title 18A of the
39 New Jersey Statutes;

40 "State facility" means a State developmental center, a State
41 Division of Youth and Family Services' residential center, a State
42 residential mental health center, a Department of Children and
43 Families Regional Day School, a State training school/secure care
44 facility, a State juvenile community program, a juvenile detention
45 center or a boot camp under the supervisory authority of the
46 Youth Justice Commission pursuant to P.L.1995, c.284 (C.52:17B-
47 169 et seq.), or an institution operated by or under contract with the

1 Department of Corrections, Children and Families or Human
2 Services, or the Youth Justice Commission;

3 "Statewide equalized school tax rate" means the amount
4 calculated by dividing the general fund tax levy for all school
5 districts, which excludes county vocational school districts and
6 county special services school districts as defined pursuant to this
7 section, in the State for the prebudget year by the equalized
8 valuations certified in the year prior to the prebudget year of all
9 taxing districts in the State except taxing districts for which there
10 are not school tax levies;

11 "Tax levy growth limitation" means the permitted annual
12 increase in the adjusted tax levy for a school district as calculated
13 pursuant to sections 3 and 4 of P.L.2007, c.62 (C.18A:7F-38 and
14 18A:7F-39).

15 (cf: P.L.2025, c.35, s.37)

16

17 5. Section 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54) is amended to
18 read as follows:

19 12. a. **【District factor group A and B school districts, and district**
20 **factor group CD school districts with a concentration of at-risk**
21 **pupils equal to or greater than 40%, shall provide free access to**
22 **full-day preschool for all three- and four-year old pupils. All other**
23 **school districts shall provide free access to full-day preschool for**
24 **at-risk pupils. Preschool education aid shall reflect the cost of the**
25 **pupil's placement in either a district program, a licensed child care**
26 **provider program, or a Head Start Program.】** (Deleted by
27 amendment, P.L. , c.) (pending before the Legislature as this
28 bill)

29 (1) **【Preschool】** In the case of a school district that received
30 preschool education aid in the 2024-2025 school year, preschool
31 education aid shall be calculated **【for district factor group A and B**
32 **school districts, and for district factor group CD school districts**
33 **with a concentration of at-risk pupils equal to or greater than 40%,】**
34 as follows:

35
$$\text{Aid} = (\text{IDE} \times \text{IDA}) + (\text{PRE} \times \text{PRA}) + (\text{HSE} \times \text{HSA})$$

36 where

37 IDE is the **【number】** projected FTE enrollment for the upcoming
38 school year of district pupils, other than preschool disabled pupils,
39 in an in-district preschool program;

40 IDA is the per pupil aid amount for an in-district preschool
41 program;

42 PRE is the **【number】** projected FTE enrollment for the upcoming
43 school year of district pupils, other than preschool disabled pupils,
44 in a preschool program operated by a licensed child care provider;

45 PRA is the per pupil aid amount for a preschool program
46 operated by a licensed child care provider;

1 HSE is the **【number】** projected FTE enrollment for the
2 upcoming school year of district pupils, other than preschool
3 disabled pupils, in a Head Start Program; and
4 HSA is the per pupil aid amount for a Head Start Program.
5 **【A CD school district with a concentration of at-risk pupils equal to**
6 **or greater than 40% shall be eligible to receive preschool education**
7 **aid pursuant to the provisions of this paragraph for a minimum of**
8 **three school years from the time of initial determination of**
9 **eligibility even if the district's concentration of at-risk pupils falls**
10 **below a 40% concentration of at-risk pupils. In the event that the**
11 **district falls below a 40% concentration of at-risk pupils for two**
12 **consecutive school years, in the third school year the district shall**
13 **receive preschool education aid for each at-risk pupil and for any**
14 **four-year old pupil for whom the district received preschool**
15 **education aid in the prior school year, and that pupil shall receive**
16 **free preschool education.】**
17 (2) **【Preschool education aid shall be calculated for all other**
18 **districts as follows:**
19
$$\text{Aid} = (\text{ARID} \times \text{IDA}) + (\text{ARP} \times \text{PRA}) + (\text{ARHS} \times \text{HSA})$$

20 where
21 ARID is the number of at-risk district pupils, other than
22 preschool disabled pupils, in an in-district preschool program;
23 IDA is the per pupil aid amount for an in-district preschool
24 program;
25 ARP is the number of at-risk district pupils, other than preschool
26 disabled pupils, in a preschool program operated by a licensed child
27 care provider;
28 PRA is the per pupil aid amount for a preschool program
29 operated by a licensed child care provider;
30 ARHS is the number of at-risk district pupils, other than
31 preschool disabled pupils, in a Head Start Program; and
32 HSA is the per pupil aid amount for a Head Start Program.】
33 (Deleted by amendment, P.L. _____, c. _____) (pending before the
34 Legislature as this bill)
35 b. **【In accordance with regulations adopted by the**
36 **commissioner, all districts shall submit a five-year plan that**
37 **provides for the full implementation of full-day preschool for all**
38 **eligible three- and four-year olds by the 2013-2014 school year. For**
39 **the purposes of this section, "full implementation" means serving**
40 **90% of eligible pupils in accordance with the preschool quality**
41 **standards adopted by the commissioner or such greater percentage**
42 **as determined by the commissioner. A school district shall annually**
43 **update the five-year plan based on actual implementation**
44 **experience and shall revise its pupil projections in accordance with**
45 **that experience.】** (Deleted by amendment, P.L. _____, c. _____) (pending
46 before the Legislature as this bill)

1 c. (1) **【**In the case of a school district that did not receive any
2 form of preschool aid in the 2007-2008 school year, the 2008-2009
3 school year shall be a preschool planning year. Beginning in the
4 2009-2010 school year, the school district shall receive preschool
5 education aid calculated in accordance with the provisions of
6 subsection a. of this section based upon projected preschool
7 enrollment.

8 In the 2009-2010 school year the school district may also receive
9 start-up funds in accordance with regulations adopted by the
10 commissioner. **】** (Deleted by amendment, P.L. , c.) (pending
11 before the Legislature as this bill)

12 (2) In the case of a school district that received Early Launch to
13 Learning Initiative aid in the 2007-2008 school year, **【**for the 2008-
14 2009 school year the district shall receive preschool education aid
15 in an amount equal to the district's allocation of Early Launch to
16 Learning Initiative aid in the 2007-2008 school year. Beginning in
17 the 2009-2010 school year, **】** the school district shall receive
18 preschool education aid calculated in accordance with the
19 provisions of paragraph (1) of subsection a. of this section **【**based
20 upon projected preschool enrollment.

21 In the 2009-2010 school year the school district may also receive
22 start-up funds in accordance with regulations adopted by the
23 commissioner **】** pending a determination by the commissioner that
24 the district is prepared to meet all program requirements for high-
25 quality preschool pursuant to regulations adopted by the
26 commissioner.

27 (3) In the case of a school district that received early childhood
28 program aid in the 2007-2008 school year but did not receive
29 preschool expansion aid or education opportunity aid in that year,
30 **【**for the 2008-2009 school year the district shall receive preschool
31 education aid equal to the greater of the district's 2007-2008 amount
32 of early childhood program aid for preschool or the district's 2007-
33 2008 per pupil allocation of early childhood program aid as
34 included in the district's original 2007-2008 budget certified for
35 taxes, inflated by the CPI, and multiplied by the district's projected
36 preschool enrollment; except that if the district is able to
37 demonstrate in the five-year plan submitted to the commissioner
38 that it has the capacity to offer a full-day three- or four-year-old
39 program, or a full-day three- and four-year-old program, in the
40 2008-2009 school year, the commissioner may approve the funding
41 of the full-day program calculated in accordance with the provisions
42 of subsection a. of this section based upon projected preschool
43 enrollment. The district shall be informed of the commissioner's
44 determination upon approval of the five-year plan. Beginning in the
45 2009-2010 school year, **】** the school district shall receive preschool
46 education aid calculated in accordance with the provisions of

1 paragraph (1) of subsection a. of this section ~~based upon projected~~
2 ~~preschool enrollment.~~

3 In the 2009-2010 school year the school district may also receive
4 start-up funds in accordance with regulations adopted by the
5 commissioner ~~pending a determination by the commissioner that~~
6 the district is prepared to meet all program requirements for high-
7 quality preschool pursuant to regulations adopted by the
8 commissioner.

9 (4) ~~In the case of a school district that received preschool~~
10 ~~expansion aid or education opportunity aid in the 2007-2008 school~~
11 ~~year, for the 2008-2009 school year the district shall receive~~
12 ~~preschool education aid in an amount equal to the preschool budget~~
13 ~~approved by the commissioner for the 2008-2009 school year.~~
14 ~~Preschool education aid for the 2008-2009 school year shall be~~
15 ~~adjusted following receipt of the Application for State School Aid~~
16 ~~in October 2008. Beginning in the 2009-2010 school year, the~~
17 ~~school district shall receive preschool education aid calculated in~~
18 ~~accordance with the provisions of subsection a. of this section based~~
19 ~~upon projected preschool enrollment; except that for any school~~
20 ~~year the district shall not receive preschool aid in an amount less~~
21 ~~than either the total amount of preschool aid the district received in~~
22 ~~the 2008-2009 school year after the State aid adjustment or the~~
23 ~~district's 2008-2009 school year preschool per pupil aid amount~~
24 ~~multiplied by the projected number of preschool pupils after the~~
25 ~~State aid adjustment, whichever is greater.~~

26 In the 2009-2010 school year the school district may also receive
27 start-up funds in accordance with regulations adopted by the
28 commissioner. ~~(Deleted by amendment, P.L. , c.) (pending~~
29 ~~before the Legislature as this bill)~~

30 d. For the 2008-2009 school year, the preschool per pupil aid
31 amounts shall be \$11,506 for pupils enrolled in an in-district
32 program, \$12,934 for pupils enrolled in a licensed child care
33 provider program, and \$7,146 for pupils enrolled in a Head Start
34 Program. The preschool per pupil aid amounts shall be adjusted by
35 the CPI in the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school years as required
36 pursuant to subsection b. of section 4 of this act. For subsequent
37 school years, the preschool per pupil aid amounts shall be
38 established in the Educational Adequacy Report, with the amounts
39 adjusted by the CPI for each of the two school years following the
40 first school year to which the report is applicable.

41 e. A district shall appropriate preschool education aid in a
42 special revenue fund for expenditure. In the event that any
43 preschool education aid is not expended during the budget year, the
44 aid may be carried forward in accordance with regulations adopted
45 by the commissioner.

46 f. In the event that a district has fully implemented a full-day
47 preschool program for three- and four-year old pupils ~~In~~

1 accordance with its five-year plan】 and meets the preschool quality
 2 standards or has provided preschool education to the number of
 3 eligible students to be served during a school year in accordance
 4 with 【that plan and its annual updates and】 the preschool quality
 5 standards, the district may appropriate preschool education aid 【to
 6 support kindergarten through grade 12 or to provide preschool
 7 education for three- and four-year old pupils for whom the district
 8 is not required to provide preschool education upon the approval of
 9 the commissioner. The district shall request approval in its annual
 10 plan update and any approval granted by the commissioner shall be
 11 made during the annual school budget process】 for additional
 12 purposes that may be designated by the commissioner, which
 13 purposes shall include, but not be limited to, providing summer
 14 programming for preschool students, professional development for
 15 preschool staff, preschool facilities improvements, and
 16 transportation services for preschool pupils.

17 g. A school district shall maintain the preschool quality
 18 standards as adopted by the commissioner as a condition of receipt
 19 of preschool education aid.

20 h. In the case of a school district that first receives preschool
 21 education aid in the 2025-2026, 2026-2027, or 2027-2028 school
 22 years, the aid shall be provided, within the limit of available
 23 appropriations, pursuant to a three-year pilot program established
 24 by the commissioner that includes a cost sharing methodology
 25 between the State and the school district such that the amount of
 26 preschool education aid allocated to the district shall be calculated
 27 by multiplying the district aid percentage by the amount calculated
 28 pursuant to the formula in paragraph (1) of subsection a. of this
 29 section, where the district aid percentage shall be equal to the
 30 greater of the district aid percentage as defined pursuant to section 3
 31 of P.L.2000, c.72 (C.18A:7G-3) or 40 percent of eligible costs.

32 i. A school district receiving preschool education aid shall
 33 obtain approval by the Commissioner of Education, in a manner
 34 prescribed by the commissioner, prior to implementing any
 35 significant redistribution, as defined by the commissioner, of State-
 36 funded preschool seats among district-operated programs, licensed
 37 child care providers, and Head Start programs.

38 (cf: P.L.2007, c.260, s.12)

39

40 6. (New section) a. The Department of Education shall, within the
 41 limit of funds appropriated, annually provide at least one opportunity
 42 to award preschool expansion grants in accordance with the provisions
 43 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill).
 44 A school district shall be eligible to apply for and receive a preschool
 45 expansion grant if the district provides full-day kindergarten at the
 46 time of application and meets any other criteria the Commissioner of
 47 Education deems appropriate. An eligible school district shall submit
 48 an application to the commissioner, in a manner and form determined

1 by the commissioner, which application shall include, but not be
2 limited to, the following:

3 (1) a general overview of the district's proposed preschool
4 program operational plan;

5 (2) enrollment projections for preschool students, other than
6 preschool students with disabilities, for the next five years;

7 (3) a description of the district's proposed preschool curriculum;

8 (4) a description of intended strategies to ensure the inclusion of
9 preschool children with disabilities in general education settings to the
10 maximum extent possible;

11 (5) a description of intended strategies to annually identify and
12 recruit families of at-risk pupils and other hard-to-reach populations,
13 and subsequently ensure these children receive priority placement in
14 the preschool program;

15 (6) a demonstration of due diligence to partner with all ready,
16 willing, and able licensed child care providers and Head Start
17 programs in the district's immediate and neighboring communities ¹,
18 which shall be made in a manner determined by the commissioner and
19 shall include, but not be limited to, documenting all efforts the
20 applicant made to engage with all licensed child care providers and
21 Head Start programs in the applicant's immediate and neighboring
22 communities¹;

23 (7) an analysis of community need and the potential impact of a
24 mixed delivery model of preschool education in a format determined
25 by the commissioner or, if the applicant does not propose a mixed
26 delivery model, justification for the decision not to do so, which
27 justification shall include evidence that the district has adequate
28 facility and staffing resources to implement high-quality preschool
29 education without a mixed delivery model ¹or that extenuating
30 circumstances in the eligible school district's community limit
31 accessibility to, or feasibility of partnership with, licensed childcare
32 centers and Head Start programs¹; and

33 (8) a description of the strategies the district has in place for
34 serving eligible preschool students, with a five-year plan to serve 90
35 percent of the district's universe of three- and four-year olds.

36 b. In determining preschool expansion grant amounts and
37 recipients, the commissioner shall give preference to districts in
38 accordance with the concentration of at-risk pupils, as defined in
39 section 3 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-45). Preference given
40 pursuant to this subsection shall ensure that, all other application
41 criteria being equal, applicants with higher concentrations of at-risk
42 students receive funding priority. The commissioner may prioritize
43 applicants representing a consortium of school districts agreeing to
44 make a high-quality preschool program available in all member
45 districts.

46 c. The Department of Education, the Department of Children and
47 Families, and the Department of Human Services shall maintain on the
48 departments' Internet websites a page that includes:

- 1 (1) a list of all districts ¹**receiving preschool expansion grants**
2 offering State-funded preschool¹ for the school year;
- 3 (2) a list of all districts eligible to apply for preschool expansion
4 grants for the school year;
- 5 (3) a list of all licensed child care providers and Head Start
6 programs in each district's community, as well as in neighboring
7 communities; and
- 8 (4) the contact information for all district-operated preschool
9 programs, licensed child care providers, and Head Start programs.
- 10 d. The Department of Education, the Department of Children and
11 Families, and the Department of Human Services shall annually update
12 the information required pursuant to subsection c. of this section no
13 later than July 14 of each year. ¹The Department of Education, the
14 Department of Children and Families, and the Department of Human
15 Services shall update the information required pursuant to subsection
16 c. of this section in a timely manner after any preschool expansion
17 grants are awarded.¹
18
- 19 7. (New section) a. A school district that receives preschool
20 education aid pursuant to section 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-
21 54) shall:
- 22 (1) demonstrate due diligence to partner with all ready, willing,
23 and able licensed child care providers and Head Start programs in
24 the immediate and neighboring communities; and
- 25 (2) submit to the Department of Education an annual program
26 plan detailing the status of the district's preschool program
27 implementation. The plan shall include information specified by the
28 commissioner, including but not limited to:
- 29 (a) the district's comprehensive curriculum;
- 30 (b) protocol for how students' families can access community
31 services, including services offered by licensed child care providers
32 and Head Start programs;
- 33 (c) a description of how the district conducts outreach to
34 families to determine individual family needs, advocate on their
35 behalf, and obtain appropriate community services; and
- 36 (d) a description of how the district identifies and recruits
37 families of at-risk pupils and other hard-to-reach populations, and
38 subsequently ensures these children receive priority placement in
39 the preschool program.
- 40 b. A school district that receives preschool education aid
41 pursuant to section 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54) shall
42 participate in a system of self-assessment for continuous quality
43 improvement approved by the Department of Education to inform
44 the school district of the status of its preschool program
45 implementation. The system shall identify program areas in need of
46 improvement based on a self-assessment, and shall include a
47 validation visit by a State team at least once every three years. The
48 department may, based on the results of a district's self-assessment

1 and the validation visit, require the district to complete an
2 improvement plan. The improvement plan shall include a detailed
3 explanation and timeline of the steps the district will take to
4 improve areas identified for improvement.

5
6 8. (New section) The Department of Education, the Department
7 of Children and Families, and the Department of Human Services
8 shall, in consultation with school districts, licensed child care
9 providers, Head Start program providers, and other stakeholders
10 identified by the Commissioner of Education, submit a report to the
11 Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1) no
12 later than March 1 next following the date of enactment of P.L. ,
13 c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill) 'and each
14 March 1 annually thereafter' on the status of preschool education in
15 the State and the efficacy of the mixed delivery method of preschool
16 education. The Department of Education may utilize up to \$250,000 of
17 any appropriation for preschool education aid to contract temporary
18 staff to assist with the preparation of the report issued pursuant to this
19 section.

20
21 9. (New section) a. There is established in the Department of
22 Education a Universal Preschool Implementation Steering Committee.
23 The members of the committee shall be as follows:

- 24 (1) the Commissioner of Education, or a designee;
- 25 (2) the Commissioner of Children and Families, or a designee;
- 26 (3) the Commissioner of Human Services, or a designee;
- 27 (4) the Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development, or a
28 designee;
- 29 (5) the Commissioner of Health, or a designee;
- 30 (6) the Chief Executive Officer of the New Jersey Economic
31 Development Authority, or a designee;
- 32 (7) one member appointed by the President of the Senate, who
33 shall be an employee of the Legislature; and
- 34 (8) one member appointed by the Speaker of the General
35 Assembly, who shall be an employee of the Legislature.

36 b. The duties of the committee shall be as follows:

- 37 (1) recommending to the Governor and Legislature a funding
38 methodology for preschool costs to be implemented for all school
39 districts beginning in the 2028-2029 school year, which may include
40 proposing a Preschool Adequacy Budget and preschool education aid
41 formula modeled after the calculation of equalization aid pursuant to
42 section 11 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-53);
- 43 (2) evaluating the pilot program established pursuant to subsection
44 h. of section 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54) for school districts
45 that first receive preschool education aid in the 2025-2026, 2026-2027,
46 and 2027-2028 school years;

1 (3) proposing methods to incentivize school districts to pursue
2 mixed delivery partnerships with licensed child care providers and
3 Head Start programs;

4 (4) proposing optional methods for school districts to establish
5 centralized enrollment systems that prioritize family choice first in
6 determining a preschool student's placement setting;

7 (5) analyzing whether providing an adjustment to school districts'
8 tax levy growth limitation related to preschool costs is necessary or
9 beneficial to the State's preschool expansion efforts; and

10 (6) recommending any appropriate means by which the State can
11 seek to strengthen and expand the preschool workforce.

12 c. The steering committee '【may】 shall' convene one or more
13 local subcommittees to solicit input from local practitioners to
14 facilitate completion of the requirements set forth in subsection b. of
15 this section.

16 d. The steering committee shall organize within 90 days of the
17 effective date of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature
18 as this bill).

19
20 10. (New section) The Department of Education, in consultation
21 with the Department of Children and Families, shall develop and
22 periodically update a Mixed Delivery Model Preschool Handbook
23 to compile all State requirements and associated guidance
24 documents, organized by topic, deemed relevant by the
25 Commissioner of Education. The topics addressed in the handbook
26 shall include, but not be limited to:

- 27 a. funding and staffing requirements;
28 b. school district and licensed child care provider program
29 administration;
30 c. eligibility, recruitment, and enrollment;
31 d. family engagement;
32 e. curriculum;
33 f. child assessments;
34 g. classroom assessments and program evaluation;
35 h. optional strategies for school districts to establish centralized
36 enrollment systems that prioritize family choice first in determining
37 a preschool student's placement setting; and
38 i. strategies for supporting contracted licensed child care
39 providers in maintaining access to infant and toddler care.

40
41 11. (New section) In order to strengthen and expand the
42 preschool workforce, the Secretary of Higher Education shall
43 develop guidance encouraging two- and four-year public
44 institutions of higher education to enter into joint dual degree
45 admission agreements that require all credits earned toward Early
46 Childhood Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degrees to be
47 fully transferable and applicable to course requirements for

1 educator preparation programs at four-year institutions of higher
2 education.

3
4 ¹【12. (New section) The Department of Children and Families,
5 in consultation with the Department of Human Services and
6 Department of Education, shall develop guidance for licensed child
7 care providers to establish graduated salary scales for private
8 teachers working toward preschool certification. The guidance
9 shall encourage the development of salary scales that provide salary
10 increases for increased academic preparation, including the
11 completion of a Child Development Associate credential, the
12 attainment of credits toward degree completion, the award of a
13 bachelor's degree in early childhood education, and the receipt of
14 an early childhood teacher certification.】¹

15
16 ¹【13.】 12.¹ N.J.S.18A:44-2 is amended to read as follows:

17 18A:44-2. a. The board of education of 【any】 a district 【may】
18 serving elementary grades shall establish a kindergarten school or
19 kindergarten department, which in order to receive State aid shall
20 be a one-year program in advance of or in preparation for entrance
21 to first grade, in any school under its control, and 【may admit to
22 such kindergarten school or department any child over the age of
23 four and under the age of five and】 shall admit to 【such】 the
24 kindergarten school or department any child over the age of five
25 and under the age of six years as of October 1 of that school year
26 who is a resident of the district , but a board of education may, in its
27 discretion, admit any student who turns five after this date if they
28 meet entrance requirements as may be established by the rules and
29 regulations of the board through a board approved policy.

30 b. A kindergarten school or kindergarten department established
31 by a board of education shall provide a full-day kindergarten
32 program no later than the beginning of the 2029-2030 school year;
33 provided, however, that a district not providing a full-day
34 kindergarten program prior to the effective date of P.L. ,

35 c. (pending before the Legislature as this bill) may satisfy the
36 requirements of this subsection by entering a sending-receiving
37 relationship with a kindergarten school or kindergarten department
38 established by the board of education of an adjacent school district.
39 The tuition of students attending a kindergarten school or
40 kindergarten department in another district in accordance with a
41 sending-receive agreement shall be determined in accordance with
42 N.J.S.18A:38-19. Attendance at a kindergarten school or
43 kindergarten department shall be free in accordance with the
44 requirements of N.J.S.18A:38-1.

45 (cf: P.L.1996, c.138, s.72)

1 ¹**14.** ~~13.~~ Section 8 of P.L.2000, c.72 (C.18A:7G-8) is
2 amended to read as follows:

3 8. a. The number of unhoused students shall be calculated as the
4 number of FTE students who are projected to be enrolled in
5 **preschool for children with disabilities, preschool,** kindergarten,
6 grades 1 through 12, and special education services pupil
7 educational programs provided in a district within five years, which
8 are in excess of the functional capacity of the district's current
9 school facilities or the functional capacity of the school facilities
10 which will be available within five years other than the school
11 facilities for which the preliminary eligible costs are determined,
12 based upon the district's long-range facilities plan. The
13 determination of unhoused capacity shall separately consider
14 projected enrollments and functional capacities at the **early**
15 **childhood and** elementary (**preschool** kindergarten through
16 grade 5), middle (grades 6 through 8), and high school (grades 9
17 through 12) levels. For the purpose of calculating the district's
18 unhoused students, special education services students shall be
19 considered part of the grade level to which the students'
20 chronological age corresponds. In the event that the commissioner
21 approves a school facilities project which involves the construction
22 of a new school facility to replace an existing school facility, which
23 shall accommodate both the unhoused students and the students in
24 the existing school facility, the calculation of the number of
25 unhoused students shall include the number of students currently
26 attending the existing facility which is to be replaced.

27 b. Approved area for unhoused students (AU) shall be
28 determined according to the following formula:

29
$$AU = \mathbf{[(UEC \times SEC) +]} (UE \times SE) + (UM \times SM) + (UH \times SH)$$

30 where

31 **UEC,** UE, UM, UH are the numbers of unhoused students in
32 the **early childhood,** elementary, middle, and high school
33 enrollment categories, respectively; and

34 **SEC,** SE, SM, SH are the area allowances per FTE student in
35 **preschool and** kindergarten **, grades 1** through grade 5, grades
36 6 through 8, and grades 9 through 12, respectively. Area allowances
37 shall be determined based on the grade level of a student regardless
38 of the grade configurations used in the school buildings of the
39 district.

40 The minimum area allowance per FTE student shall be as
41 follows:

42 Preschool <u>Kindergarten</u> through grade 5	125 sq. ft.
43 Grades 6 through 8	134 sq. ft.
44 Grades 9 through 12	151 sq. ft.

45 The commissioner, in consultation with the State Treasurer and
46 the Commissioner of Community Affairs, shall adopt regulations
47 that establish a process for the consideration of special

1 circumstances, in addition to those provided in section 5 of
2 P.L.2010, c.72 (C.18A:7G-5), in which the area allowances per FTE
3 student established pursuant to this subsection may be adjusted.
4 Any decision made by the commissioner pursuant to those
5 regulations shall be made in consultation with the State Treasurer
6 and the Commissioner of Community Affairs.
7 (cf: P.L.2017, c.131, s.18)

8
9 ¹**[15.]** 14.¹ (New section) The Commissioner of Education
10 shall adopt, pursuant to the “Administrative Procedure Act,”
11 P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), rules and regulations
12 necessary to effectuate the provisions of this act.

13
14 ¹**[16]** 15¹. This act shall take effect immediately ¹.¹
15
16
17
18

19 _____
20 Makes various changes to provision of preschool aid and
21 facilities requirements; establishes Universal Preschool
22 Implementation Steering Committee; requires full-day kindergarten
in all school districts.

CHAPTER 100

AN ACT concerning early childhood education, amending various parts of the statutory law, and supplementing P.L.2007, c.260 and chapters 26 and 44 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

BE IT ENACTED by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:

C.18A:44-7 Short title.

1. Sections 1 and 2 and 6 through 11 of this act shall be known and may be cited as the “New Jersey Universal Preschool and Kindergarten Act.”

C.18A:44-8 Findings, declarations.

2. The Legislature finds and declares that:

a. Research is clear that high-quality preschool can change the educational trajectories of young children, particularly economically disadvantaged children and multilingual learners. Improvements in literacy, numeracy, social-emotional and self-regulatory development, and lifetime earnings have been demonstrated among individuals who attend high-quality preschool compared to their peers.

b. New Jersey leads the nation in expanding access to high-quality preschool opportunities. The State has achieved a unique and world-class combination of significant financial investment and rigorous quality standards. New Jersey State-funded preschools are required to serve three- and four-year olds in full-day programs featuring small class sizes led by quality instructors with ample curriculum support, professional development, and accommodations for students with special needs. New Jersey’s State spending on preschool is among the highest in the country, with clear, significant impacts on our public school system: tens of thousands of three- and four-year olds in hundreds of communities around the State attend transformative high-quality early education programs.

c. District-operated preschool programs, licensed childcare centers, and Head Start programs form an interrelated and interdependent early childhood ecosystem. Each component is made stronger by the other, and the system is greater and more impactful than the sum of its parts. No component can reach its full potential without the facilities, staff, resources, and expertise of the others. Together, the system represents a continuum of education and care services from birth through age five necessary not only for children to realize their full life potential, but for families to participate fully in economic and civic society. To lift up this system is a moral and economic imperative.

d. To build on the State’s preschool expansion progress to date and to realize the full benefits of high-quality preschool, it is fitting and proper for the State to enshrine certain policies and values in State law, including:

(1) providing sustainable, annual financial support for expanding access to high-quality preschool;

(2) codifying preschool education aid provisions previously implemented through language in various annual appropriations acts and harmonizing New Jersey law accordingly;

(3) prioritizing expansion for economically disadvantaged families and communities;

(4) requiring State-funded preschool programs to make every effort to partner with local ready, willing, and able licensed childcare providers and Head Start programs; and

(5) conducting ongoing evaluations of the State’s approach to early childhood and preschool education to ensure that policy continues to reflect stakeholder expertise and evolving research.

e. In addition to high-quality preschool education, full-day kindergarten is necessary not only to unlock a child’s full learning potential, but to facilitate a smooth transition from high-quality preschool into elementary programs.

3. Section 3 of P.L.2007, c.62 (C.18A:7F-38) is amended to read as follows:

C.18A:7F-38 School district budget increase limited.

3. a. Notwithstanding the provisions of any other law to the contrary, a school district shall not adopt a budget pursuant to sections 5 and 6 of P.L.1996, c.138 (C.18A:7F-5 and 18A:7F-6) with an increase in its adjusted tax levy that exceeds, except as provided in subsection e. of section 4 of P.L.2007, c.62 (C.18A:7F-39), the tax levy growth limitation calculated as follows: the sum of the prebudget year adjusted tax levy and the adjustment for increases in enrollment multiplied by 2.0 percent, and adjustments for an increase in health care costs, increases in amounts for certain normal and accrued liability pension contributions set forth in sections 1 and 2 of P.L.2009, c.19 amending section 24 of P.L.1954, c.84 (C.43:15A-24) and section 15 of P.L.1944, c.255 (C.43:16A-15) for the year set forth in those sections, in the case of an SDA district as defined pursuant to section 3 of P.L.2000, c.72 (C.18A:7G-3), during the 2018-2019 through the 2024-2025 school years, increases to raise a general fund tax levy to an amount that does not exceed its local share, and, in the case of a school district first receiving preschool education aid in the 2025-2026, 2026-2027, or 2027-2028 school years and participating in the pilot program established by the commissioner pursuant to subsection h. of section 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54), increases to raise a general fund tax levy for the local share of preschool education costs.

b. (1) The allowable adjustment for increases in enrollment authorized pursuant to subsection a. of this section shall equal the per pupil prebudget year adjusted tax levy multiplied by EP, where EP equals the sum of:

(a) 0.50 for each unit of weighted resident enrollment that constitutes an increase from the prebudget year over 1%, but not more than 2.5%;

(b) 0.75 for each unit of weighted resident enrollment that constitutes an increase from the prebudget year over 2.5%, but not more than 4%; and

(c) 1.00 for each unit of weighted resident enrollment that constitutes an increase from the prebudget year over 4%.

(2) A school district may request approval from the commissioner to calculate EP equal to 1.00 for any increase in weighted resident enrollment if it can demonstrate that the calculation pursuant to paragraph (1) of this subsection would result in an average class size that exceeds 10% above the facilities efficiency standards established pursuant to P.L.2000, c.72 (C.18A:7G-1 et al.).

c. (Deleted by amendment, P.L.2010, c.44)

d. (1) The allowable adjustment for increases in health care costs authorized pursuant to subsection a. of this section shall equal that portion of the actual increase in total health care costs for the budget year, less any withdrawals from the current expense emergency reserve account for increases in total health care costs, that exceeds 2.0 percent of the total health care costs in the prebudget year, but that is not in excess of the product of the total health care costs in the prebudget year multiplied by the average percentage increase of the State Health Benefits Program, P.L.1961, c.49 (C.52:14-17.25 et seq.), as annually determined by the Division of Pensions and Benefits in the Department of the Treasury.

(2) The allowable adjustment for increases in the amount of normal and accrued liability pension contributions authorized pursuant to subsection a. of this section shall equal that portion of the actual increase in total normal and accrued liability pension contributions for the budget year that exceeds 2.0 percent of the total normal and accrued liability pension contributions in the prebudget year.

(3) In the case of an SDA district, as defined pursuant to section 3 of P.L.2000, c.72 (C.18A:7G-3), in which the prebudget year adjusted tax levy is less than the school district's prebudget year local share as calculated pursuant to section 10 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-52), the allowable adjustment for increases to raise a tax levy that does not exceed the school district's local share shall equal the difference between the prebudget year adjusted tax levy and the prebudget year local share.

(4) In the case of a school district first receiving preschool education aid in the 2025-2026, 2026-2027, or 2027-2028 school years and participating in the pilot program established by the commissioner pursuant to subsection h. of section 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54), the allowable adjustment for increases to raise a general fund tax levy for the local share of preschool education costs shall be equal to the actual increase required to provide preschool education under the pilot program less State aid provided pursuant to subsection h. of section 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54).

A school district first receiving preschool education aid in the 2025-2026 school year and participating in the pilot program established by the commissioner pursuant to subsection h. of section 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54) may, prior to the delivery of tax bills pursuant to R.S.54:4-64, recertify to the county board of taxation the sum to be raised in the district during the ensuing school year if the change in the amount to be raised is equal to the district's local share of preschool education costs for that school year.

e. (Deleted by amendment, P.L.2010, c.44)

f. The adjusted tax levy shall be increased or decreased accordingly whenever the responsibility and associated cost of a school district activity is transferred to another school district or governmental entity.

4. Section 3 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-45) is amended to read as follows:

C.18A:7F-45 Definitions relative to school funding reform.

3. As used in P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-43 et al.) and P.L.1996, c.138 (C.18A:7F-1 et al.), unless the context clearly requires a different meaning:

"At-risk pupils" means those resident pupils from households with a household income at or below the most recent federal poverty guidelines available on October 15 of the prebudget year multiplied by 1.85;

"Base per pupil amount" means the cost per elementary pupil of delivering the core curriculum content standards and extracurricular and cocurricular activities necessary for a thorough and efficient education;

"Bilingual education pupil" means a resident pupil enrolled in a program of bilingual education or in an English as a second language program approved by the State Board of Education;

"Budgeted local share" means the district's local tax levy contained in the budget certified for taxation purposes;

"Capital outlay" means capital outlay as defined in GAAP;

"Combination pupil" means a resident pupil who is both an at-risk pupil and a bilingual education pupil;

"Commissioner" means the Commissioner of Education;

"Concentration of at-risk pupils" shall be based on prebudget year pupil data and means, for a school district or a county vocational school district, the number of at-risk pupils among those counted in resident enrollment, divided by resident enrollment;

"County special services school district" means any entity established pursuant to article 8 of chapter 46 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes;

"County vocational school district" means any entity established pursuant to article 3 of chapter 54 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes;

"CPI" means the increase, expressed as a decimal, in the average annualized consumer price index for the New York City and Philadelphia areas in the fiscal year preceding the prebudget year relative to the previous fiscal year as reported by the United States Department of Labor;

"Debt service" means payments of principal and interest upon school bonds and other obligations issued to finance the purchase or construction of school facilities, additions to school facilities, or the reconstruction, remodeling, alteration, modernization, renovation or repair of school facilities, including furnishings, equipment, architect fees, and the costs of issuance of such obligations and shall include payments of principal and interest upon bonds heretofore issued to fund or refund such obligations, and upon municipal bonds and other obligations which the commissioner approves as having been issued for such purposes;

"District income" means the aggregate income of the residents of the taxing district or taxing districts, based upon data provided by the Division of Taxation in the New Jersey Department of the Treasury and contained on the New Jersey State Income Tax forms for the calendar year ending two years prior to the prebudget year. The commissioner may supplement data contained on the State Income Tax forms with data available from other State or federal agencies in order to better correlate the data to that collected on the federal census. With respect to regional districts and their constituent districts, however, the district income as described above shall be allocated among the regional and constituent districts in proportion to the number of pupils resident in each of them;

"Equalized valuation" means the equalized valuation of the taxing district or taxing districts, as certified by the Director of the Division of Taxation on October 1, or subsequently revised by the tax court by January 15, of the prebudget year. With respect to regional districts and their constituent districts, however, the equalized valuations as described above shall be allocated among the regional and constituent districts in proportion to the number of pupils resident in each of them. In the event that the equalized table certified by the director shall be revised by the tax court after January 15 of the prebudget year, the revised valuations shall be used in the recomputation of aid for an individual school district filing an appeal, but shall have no effect upon the calculation of the property value rate, Statewide average equalized school tax rate, or Statewide equalized total tax rate;

"Full-day preschool" means a preschool day consisting of a minimum six-hour comprehensive educational program in accordance with the district's kindergarten through grade 12 school calendar;

"GAAP" means the generally accepted accounting principles established by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board as prescribed by the State board pursuant to N.J.S.18A:4-14;

"General special education services pupil" means a pupil receiving specific services pursuant to chapter 46 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes;

"Geographic cost adjustment" means an adjustment that reflects county differences in the cost of providing educational services that are outside the control of the district;

"Household income" means income as defined in 7 CFR ss.245.2 and 245.6 or any subsequent superseding federal law or regulation;

"Net budget" means the sum of the district's general fund tax levy, State aid received pursuant to the provisions of this act other than preschool education aid, miscellaneous revenue estimated pursuant to GAAP, and designated general fund balance;

"Nonpreschool ECPA" means the amount of early childhood program aid, excluding prior year carry-forward amounts, included in a district's 2007-2008 school year budget certified for taxes that was allocated to grades K through 3;

"Prebudget year" means the school fiscal year preceding the year in which the school budget is implemented;

"Preschool expansion grant" means any grant funded by a portion of preschool education aid allocated by the Commissioner of Education or any other State funds appropriated for the purpose of expanding free access to high-quality preschool for resident three- and four-year old children in districts that do not, at the time of application for a grant, provide State-funded, high-quality, free preschool programs;

"Report" means the Educational Adequacy Report issued by the commissioner pursuant to section 4 of this act;

"Resident enrollment" means the number of pupils other than preschool pupils, post-graduate pupils, and post-secondary vocational pupils who, on the last school day prior to October 16 of the current school year, are residents of the district and are enrolled in: (1) the public schools of the district, excluding evening schools, (2) another school district, other than a county vocational school district in the same county on a full-time basis, or a State college demonstration school or private school to which the district of residence pays tuition, or (3) a State facility in which they are placed by the district; or are residents of the district and are: (1) receiving home instruction, or (2) in a shared-time vocational program and are regularly attending a school in the district and a county vocational school district. In addition, resident enrollment shall include the number of pupils who, on the last school day prior to October 16 of the prebudget year, are residents of the district and in a State facility in which they were placed by the State. Pupils in a shared-time vocational program shall be counted on an equated full-time basis in accordance with procedures to be established by the commissioner. Resident enrollment shall include regardless of nonresidence, the enrolled children of teaching staff members of the school district or county vocational school district who are permitted, by contract or local district policy, to enroll their children in the educational program of the school district or county vocational school district without payment of tuition. Disabled children between three and five years of age and receiving programs and services pursuant to N.J.S.18A:46-6 shall be included in the resident enrollment of the district;

"School district" means any local or regional school district established pursuant to chapter 8 or chapter 13 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes;

"State facility" means a State developmental center, a State Division of Youth and Family Services' residential center, a State residential mental health center, a Department of Children and Families Regional Day School, a State training school/secure care facility, a State juvenile community program, a juvenile detention center or a boot camp under the supervisory authority of the Youth Justice Commission pursuant to P.L.1995, c.284 (C.52:17B-169 et seq.), or an institution operated by or under contract with the Department of Corrections, Children and Families or Human Services, or the Youth Justice Commission;

"Statewide equalized school tax rate" means the amount calculated by dividing the general fund tax levy for all school districts, which excludes county vocational school districts and county special services school districts as defined pursuant to this section, in the State for the prebudget year by the equalized valuations certified in the year prior to the prebudget year of all taxing districts in the State except taxing districts for which there are not school tax levies;

"Tax levy growth limitation" means the permitted annual increase in the adjusted tax levy for a school district as calculated pursuant to sections 3 and 4 of P.L.2007, c.62 (C.18A:7F-38 and 18A:7F-39).

5. Section 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54) is amended to read as follows:

C.18A:7F-54 Access to full-day preschool; calculation of preschool education aid.

12. a. (Deleted by amendment, P.L.2025, c.100)

(1) In the case of a school district that received preschool education aid in the 2024-2025 school year, preschool education aid shall be calculated as follows:

$Aid = (IDE \times IDA) + (PRE \times PRA) + (HSE \times HSA)$

where

IDE is the projected FTE enrollment for the upcoming school year of district pupils, other than preschool disabled pupils, in an in-district preschool program;

IDA is the per pupil aid amount for an in-district preschool program;

PRE is the projected FTE enrollment for the upcoming school year of district pupils, other than preschool disabled pupils, in a preschool program operated by a licensed child care provider;

PRA is the per pupil aid amount for a preschool program operated by a licensed child care provider;

HSE is the projected FTE enrollment for the upcoming school year of district pupils, other than preschool disabled pupils, in a Head Start Program; and

HSA is the per pupil aid amount for a Head Start Program.

(2) (Deleted by amendment, P.L.2025, c.100)

b. (Deleted by amendment, P.L.2025, c.100)

c. (1) (Deleted by amendment, P.L.2025, c.100)

(2) In the case of a school district that received Early Launch to Learning Initiative aid in the 2007-2008 school year, the school district shall receive preschool education aid calculated in accordance with the provisions of paragraph (1) of subsection a. of this section

pending a determination by the commissioner that the district is prepared to meet all program requirements for high-quality preschool pursuant to regulations adopted by the commissioner.

(3) In the case of a school district that received early childhood program aid in the 2007-2008 school year but did not receive preschool expansion aid or education opportunity aid in that year, the school district shall receive preschool education aid calculated in accordance with the provisions of paragraph (1) of subsection a. of this section pending a determination by the commissioner that the district is prepared to meet all program requirements for high-quality preschool pursuant to regulations adopted by the commissioner.

(4) (Deleted by amendment, P.L.2025, c.100)

d. For the 2008-2009 school year, the preschool per pupil aid amounts shall be \$11,506 for pupils enrolled in an in-district program, \$12,934 for pupils enrolled in a licensed child care provider program, and \$7,146 for pupils enrolled in a Head Start Program. The preschool per pupil aid amounts shall be adjusted by the CPI in the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school years as required pursuant to subsection b. of section 4 of this act. For subsequent school years, the preschool per pupil aid amounts shall be established in the Educational Adequacy Report, with the amounts adjusted by the CPI for each of the two school years following the first school year to which the report is applicable.

e. A district shall appropriate preschool education aid in a special revenue fund for expenditure. In the event that any preschool education aid is not expended during the budget year, the aid may be carried forward in accordance with regulations adopted by the commissioner.

f. In the event that a district has fully implemented a full-day preschool program for three- and four-year old pupils and meets the preschool quality standards or has provided preschool education to the number of eligible students to be served during a school year in accordance

with the preschool quality standards, the district may appropriate preschool education aid for additional purposes that may be designated by the commissioner, which purposes shall include, but not be limited to, providing summer programming for preschool students, professional development for preschool staff, preschool facilities improvements, and transportation services for preschool pupils.

g. A school district shall maintain the preschool quality standards as adopted by the commissioner as a condition of receipt of preschool education aid.

h. In the case of a school district that first receives preschool education aid in the 2025-2026, 2026-2027, or 2027-2028 school years, the aid shall be provided, within the limit of available appropriations, pursuant to a three-year pilot program established by the commissioner that includes a cost-sharing methodology between the State and the school district such that the amount of preschool education aid allocated to the district shall be calculated by multiplying the district aid percentage by the amount calculated pursuant to the formula in paragraph (1) of subsection a. of this section, where the district aid percentage shall be equal to the greater of the district aid percentage as defined pursuant to section 3 of P.L.2000, c.72 (C.18A:7G-3) or 40 percent of eligible costs.

i. A school district receiving preschool education aid shall obtain approval by the Commissioner of Education, in a manner prescribed by the commissioner, prior to implementing any significant redistribution, as defined by the commissioner, of State-funded preschool seats among district-operated programs, licensed child care providers, and Head Start programs.

C.18A:7F-54.1 Preschool expansion grants, annual opportunity, criteria.

6. a. The Department of Education shall, within the limit of funds appropriated, annually provide at least one opportunity to award preschool expansion grants in accordance with the provisions of P.L.2025, c.100 (C.18A:44-7 et al.). A school district shall be eligible to apply for and receive a preschool expansion grant if the district provides full-day kindergarten at the time of application and meets any other criteria the Commissioner of Education deems appropriate. An eligible school district shall submit an application to the commissioner, in a manner and form determined by the commissioner, which application shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- (1) a general overview of the district's proposed preschool program operational plan;
- (2) enrollment projections for preschool students, other than preschool students with disabilities, for the next five years;
- (3) a description of the district's proposed preschool curriculum;
- (4) a description of intended strategies to ensure the inclusion of preschool children with disabilities in general education settings to the maximum extent possible;
- (5) a description of intended strategies to annually identify and recruit families of at-risk pupils and other hard-to-reach populations and subsequently ensure these children receive priority placement in the preschool program;
- (6) a demonstration of due diligence to partner with all ready, willing, and able licensed child care providers and Head Start programs in the district's immediate and neighboring communities, which shall be made in a manner determined by the commissioner and shall include, but not be limited to, documenting all efforts the applicant made to engage with all licensed child care providers and Head Start programs in the applicant's immediate and neighboring communities;
- (7) an analysis of community need and the potential impact of a mixed delivery model of preschool education in a format determined by the commissioner or, if the applicant does not

propose a mixed delivery model, justification for the decision not to do so, which justification shall include evidence that the district has adequate facility and staffing resources to implement high-quality preschool education without a mixed delivery model or that extenuating circumstances in the eligible school district's community limit accessibility to, or feasibility of partnership with, licensed childcare centers and Head Start programs; and

(8) a description of the strategies the district has in place for serving eligible preschool students, with a five-year plan to serve 90 percent of the district's universe of three- and four-year olds.

b. In determining preschool expansion grant amounts and recipients, the commissioner shall give preference to districts in accordance with the concentration of at-risk pupils, as defined in section 3 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-45). Preference given pursuant to this subsection shall ensure that, all other application criteria being equal, applicants with higher concentrations of at-risk students receive funding priority. The commissioner may prioritize applicants representing a consortium of school districts agreeing to make a high-quality preschool program available in all member districts.

c. The Department of Education, the Department of Children and Families, and the Department of Human Services shall maintain on the departments' Internet websites a page that includes:

- (1) a list of all districts offering State-funded preschool for the school year;
- (2) a list of all districts eligible to apply for preschool expansion grants for the school year;
- (3) a list of all licensed child care providers and Head Start programs in each district's community, as well as in neighboring communities; and
- (4) the contact information for all district-operated preschool programs, licensed child care providers, and Head Start programs.

d. The Department of Education, the Department of Children and Families, and the Department of Human Services shall annually update the information required pursuant to subsection c. of this section no later than July 14 of each year. The Department of Education, the Department of Children and Families, and the Department of Human Services shall update the information required pursuant to subsection c. of this section in a timely manner after any preschool expansion grants are awarded.

C.18A:44-11 Preschool education aid recipients, requirements.

7. a. A school district that receives preschool education aid pursuant to section 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54) shall:

- (1) demonstrate due diligence to partner with all ready, willing, and able licensed child care providers and Head Start programs in the immediate and neighboring communities; and
- (2) submit to the Department of Education an annual program plan detailing the status of the district's preschool program implementation. The plan shall include information specified by the commissioner, including, but not limited to:
 - (a) the district's comprehensive curriculum;
 - (b) protocol for how students' families can access community services, including services offered by licensed child care providers and Head Start programs;
 - (c) a description of how the district conducts outreach to families to determine individual family needs, advocate on their behalf, and obtain appropriate community services; and
 - (d) a description of how the district identifies and recruits families of at-risk pupils and other hard-to-reach populations and subsequently ensures these children receive priority placement in the preschool program.

b. A school district that receives preschool education aid pursuant to section 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54) shall participate in a system of self-assessment for continuous quality improvement approved by the Department of Education to inform the school district of the status of its preschool program implementation. The system shall identify program areas in need of improvement based on a self-assessment and shall include a validation visit by a State team at least once every three years. The department may, based on the results of a district's self-assessment and the validation visit, require the district to complete an improvement plan. The improvement plan shall include a detailed explanation and timeline of the steps the district will take to improve areas identified for improvement.

C.18A:44-12 Report to Legislature.

8. The Department of Education, the Department of Children and Families, and the Department of Human Services shall, in consultation with school districts, licensed child care providers, Head Start program providers, and other stakeholders identified by the Commissioner of Education, submit a report to the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1) no later than March 1 next following the date of enactment of P.L.2025, c.100 (C.18A:44-7 et al.) and each March 1 annually thereafter on the status of preschool education in the State and the efficacy of the mixed delivery method of preschool education. The Department of Education may utilize up to \$250,000 of any appropriation for preschool education aid to contract temporary staff to assist with the preparation of the report issued pursuant to this section.

C.18A:44-9 Universal Preschool Implementation Steering Committee.

9. a. There is established in the Department of Education a Universal Preschool Implementation Steering Committee. The members of the committee shall be as follows:

- (1) the Commissioner of Education, or a designee;
- (2) the Commissioner of Children and Families, or a designee;
- (3) the Commissioner of Human Services, or a designee;
- (4) the Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development, or a designee;
- (5) the Commissioner of Health, or a designee;
- (6) the Chief Executive Officer of the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, or a designee;
- (7) one member appointed by the President of the Senate, who shall be an employee of the Legislature; and
- (8) one member appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly, who shall be an employee of the Legislature.

b. The duties of the committee shall be as follows:

- (1) recommending to the Governor and Legislature a funding methodology for preschool costs to be implemented for all school districts beginning in the 2028-2029 school year, which may include proposing a Preschool Adequacy Budget and preschool education aid formula modeled after the calculation of equalization aid pursuant to section 11 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-53);
- (2) evaluating the pilot program established pursuant to subsection h. of section 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54) for school districts that first receive preschool education aid in the 2025-2026, 2026-2027, and 2027-2028 school years;
- (3) proposing methods to incentivize school districts to pursue mixed delivery partnerships with licensed child care providers and Head Start programs;

(4) proposing optional methods for school districts to establish centralized enrollment systems that prioritize family choice first in determining a preschool student's placement setting;

(5) analyzing whether providing an adjustment to school districts' tax levy growth limitation related to preschool costs is necessary or beneficial to the State's preschool expansion efforts; and

(6) recommending any appropriate means by which the State can seek to strengthen and expand the preschool workforce.

c. The steering committee shall convene one or more local subcommittees to solicit input from local practitioners to facilitate completion of the requirements set forth in subsection b. of this section.

d. The steering committee shall organize within 90 days of the effective date of P.L.2025, c.100 (C.18A:44-7 et al.).

C.18A:44-10 Mixed Delivery Model Preschool Handbook.

10. The Department of Education, in consultation with the Department of Children and Families, shall develop and periodically update a Mixed Delivery Model Preschool Handbook to compile all State requirements and associated guidance documents, organized by topic, deemed relevant by the Commissioner of Education. The topics addressed in the handbook shall include, but not be limited to:

- a. funding and staffing requirements;
- b. school district and licensed child care provider program administration;
- c. eligibility, recruitment, and enrollment;
- d. family engagement;
- e. curriculum;
- f. child assessments;
- g. classroom assessments and program evaluation;
- h. optional strategies for school districts to establish centralized enrollment systems that prioritize family choice first in determining a preschool student's placement setting; and
- i. strategies for supporting contracted licensed child care providers in maintaining access to infant and toddler care.

C.18A:3B-14.4 Joint dual degree admission agreements, institutions of higher education.

11. In order to strengthen and expand the preschool workforce, the Secretary of Higher Education shall develop guidance encouraging two- and four-year public institutions of higher education to enter into joint dual degree admission agreements that require all credits earned toward Early Childhood Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degrees to be fully transferable and applicable to course requirements for educator preparation programs at four-year institutions of higher education.

12. N.J.S.18A:44-2 is amended to read as follows:

Establishment of kindergarten.

18A:44-2. a. The board of education of a district serving elementary grades shall establish a kindergarten school or kindergarten department, which in order to receive State aid shall be a one-year program in advance of or in preparation for entrance to first grade, in any school under its control, and shall admit to the kindergarten school or department any child over the age of five and under the age of six years as of October 1 of that school year who is a resident of the district, but a board of education may, in its discretion, admit any student who turns five

after this date if they meet entrance requirements as may be established by the rules and regulations of the board through a board approved policy.

b. A kindergarten school or kindergarten department established by a board of education shall provide a full-day kindergarten program no later than the beginning of the 2029-2030 school year, provided, however, that a district not providing a full-day kindergarten program prior to the effective date of P.L.2025, c.100 (C.18A:44-7 et al.) may satisfy the requirements of this subsection by entering a sending-receiving relationship with a kindergarten school or kindergarten department established by the board of education of an adjacent school district. The tuition of students attending a kindergarten school or kindergarten department in another district in accordance with a sending-receive agreement shall be determined in accordance with N.J.S.18A:38-19. Attendance at a kindergarten school or kindergarten department shall be free in accordance with the requirements of N.J.S.18A:38-1.

13. Section 8 of P.L.2000, c.72 (C.18A:7G-8) is amended to read as follows:

C.18A:7G-8 Calculation of number of unhoused students.

8. a. The number of unhoused students shall be calculated as the number of FTE students who are projected to be enrolled in kindergarten, grades 1 through 12, and special education services pupil educational programs provided in a district within five years, which are in excess of the functional capacity of the district's current school facilities or the functional capacity of the school facilities which will be available within five years other than the school facilities for which the preliminary eligible costs are determined, based upon the district's long-range facilities plan. The determination of unhoused capacity shall separately consider projected enrollments and functional capacities at the elementary (kindergarten through grade 5), middle (grades 6 through 8), and high school (grades 9 through 12) levels. For the purpose of calculating the district's unhoused students, special education services students shall be considered part of the grade level to which the students' chronological age corresponds. In the event that the commissioner approves a school facilities project which involves the construction of a new school facility to replace an existing school facility, which shall accommodate both the unhoused students and the students in the existing school facility, the calculation of the number of unhoused students shall include the number of students currently attending the existing facility which is to be replaced.

b. Approved area for unhoused students (AU) shall be determined according to the following formula:

$AU = (UE \times SE) + (UM \times SM) + (UH \times SH)$ where

UE, UM, UH are the numbers of unhoused students in the elementary, middle, and high school enrollment categories, respectively; and

SE, SM, SH are the area allowances per FTE student in kindergarten through grade 5, grades 6 through 8, and grades 9 through 12, respectively. Area allowances shall be determined based on the grade level of a student regardless of the grade configurations used in the school buildings of the district.

The minimum area allowance per FTE student shall be as follows:

Kindergarten through grade 5	125 sq. ft.
Grades 6 through 8	134 sq. ft.
Grades 9 through 12	151 sq. ft.

The commissioner, in consultation with the State Treasurer and the Commissioner of Community Affairs, shall adopt regulations that establish a process for the consideration of special circumstances, in addition to those provided in section 5 of P.L.2010, c.72 (C.18A:7G-

5), in which the area allowances per FTE student established pursuant to this subsection may be adjusted. Any decision made by the commissioner pursuant to those regulations shall be made in consultation with the State Treasurer and the Commissioner of Community Affairs.

14. The Commissioner of Education shall adopt, pursuant to the “Administrative Procedure Act,” P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), rules and regulations necessary to effectuate the provisions of this act.

15. This act shall take effect immediately.

Approved July 9, 2025.

SENATE, No. 3910

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

221st LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED NOVEMBER 18, 2024

Sponsored by:

Senator M. TERESA RUIZ

District 29 (Essex and Hudson)

Senator SHIRLEY K. TURNER

District 15 (Hunterdon and Mercer)

Co-Sponsored by:

Senator McKnight

SYNOPSIS

Codifies preschool expansion aid; expands preschool education aid.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 5/12/2025)

1 AN ACT concerning preschool education, and amending and
2 supplementing P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-43 et al.).

3

4 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
5 of New Jersey:

6

7 1. Section 3 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-45) is amended to
8 read as follows:

9 3. As used in this act and P.L.1996, c.138, unless the context
10 clearly requires a different meaning:

11 "At-risk pupils" means those resident pupils from households
12 with a household income at or below the most recent federal
13 poverty guidelines available on October 15 of the prebudget year
14 multiplied by 1.85;

15 "Base per pupil amount" means the cost per elementary pupil of
16 delivering the core curriculum content standards and extracurricular
17 and cocurricular activities necessary for a thorough and efficient
18 education;

19 "Bilingual education pupil" means a resident pupil enrolled in a
20 program of bilingual education or in an English as a second
21 language program approved by the State Board of Education;

22 "Budgeted local share" means the district's local tax levy
23 contained in the budget certified for taxation purposes;

24 "Capital outlay" means capital outlay as defined in GAAP;

25 "Combination pupil" means a resident pupil who is both an at-
26 risk pupil and a bilingual education pupil;

27 "Commissioner" means the Commissioner of Education;

28 "Concentration of at-risk pupils" shall be based on prebudget
29 year pupil data and means, for a school district or a county
30 vocational school district, the number of at-risk pupils among those
31 counted in resident enrollment, divided by resident enrollment;

32 "County special services school district" means any entity
33 established pursuant to article 8 of chapter 46 of Title 18A of the
34 New Jersey Statutes;

35 "County vocational school district" means any entity established
36 pursuant to article 3 of chapter 54 of Title 18A of the New Jersey
37 Statutes;

38 "CPI" means the increase, expressed as a decimal, in the average
39 annualized consumer price index for the New York City and
40 Philadelphia areas in the fiscal year preceding the prebudget year
41 relative to the previous fiscal year as reported by the United States
42 Department of Labor;

43 "Debt service" means payments of principal and interest upon
44 school bonds and other obligations issued to finance the purchase or
45 construction of school facilities, additions to school facilities, or the

**EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [thus] in the above bill is
not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.**

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

1 reconstruction, remodeling, alteration, modernization, renovation or
2 repair of school facilities, including furnishings, equipment,
3 architect fees, and the costs of issuance of such obligations and
4 shall include payments of principal and interest upon bonds
5 heretofore issued to fund or refund such obligations, and upon
6 municipal bonds and other obligations which the commissioner
7 approves as having been issued for such purposes;

8 "District income" means the aggregate income of the residents of
9 the taxing district or taxing districts, based upon data provided by
10 the Division of Taxation in the New Jersey Department of the
11 Treasury and contained on the New Jersey State Income Tax forms
12 for the calendar year ending two years prior to the prebudget year.
13 The commissioner may supplement data contained on the State
14 Income Tax forms with data available from other State or federal
15 agencies in order to better correlate the data to that collected on the
16 federal census. With respect to regional districts and their
17 constituent districts, however, the district income as described
18 above shall be allocated among the regional and constituent districts
19 in proportion to the number of pupils resident in each of them;

20 "Equalized valuation" means the equalized valuation of the
21 taxing district or taxing districts, as certified by the Director of the
22 Division of Taxation on October 1, or subsequently revised by the
23 tax court by January 15, of the prebudget year. With respect to
24 regional districts and their constituent districts, however, the
25 equalized valuations as described above shall be allocated among
26 the regional and constituent districts in proportion to the number of
27 pupils resident in each of them. In the event that the equalized table
28 certified by the director shall be revised by the tax court after
29 January 15 of the prebudget year, the revised valuations shall be
30 used in the recomputation of aid for an individual school district
31 filing an appeal, but shall have no effect upon the calculation of the
32 property value rate, Statewide average equalized school tax rate, or
33 Statewide equalized total tax rate;

34 "Full-day preschool" means a preschool day consisting of a six-
35 hour comprehensive educational program in accordance with the
36 district's kindergarten through grade 12 school calendar;

37 "GAAP" means the generally accepted accounting principles
38 established by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board as
39 prescribed by the State board pursuant to N.J.S.18A:4-14;

40 "General special education services pupil" means a pupil
41 receiving specific services pursuant to chapter 46 of Title 18A of
42 the New Jersey Statutes;

43 "Geographic cost adjustment" means an adjustment that reflects
44 county differences in the cost of providing educational services that
45 are outside the control of the district;

46 "Household income" means income as defined in 7 CFR ss.245.2
47 and 245.6 or any subsequent superseding federal law or regulation;

1 "Net budget" means the sum of the district's general fund tax
2 levy, State aid received pursuant to the provisions of this act other
3 than preschool education aid, miscellaneous revenue estimated
4 pursuant to GAAP, and designated general fund balance;

5 "Prebudget year" means the school fiscal year preceding the year
6 in which the school budget is implemented;

7 "Preschool expansion aid" means any portion of preschool
8 education aid allocated by the Commissioner of Education for the
9 purpose of expanding free access to preschool for resident three-
10 and four-year old children, or any other State funds appropriated for
11 the same purpose;

12 "Nonpreschool ECPA" means the amount of early childhood
13 program aid, excluding prior year carry-forward amounts, included
14 in a district's 2007-2008 school year budget certified for taxes that
15 was allocated to grades K through 3;

16 "Report" means the Educational Adequacy Report issued by the
17 commissioner pursuant to section 4 of this act;

18 "Resident enrollment" means the number of pupils other than
19 preschool pupils, post-graduate pupils, and post-secondary
20 vocational pupils who, on the last school day prior to October 16 of
21 the current school year, are residents of the district and are enrolled
22 in: (1) the public schools of the district, excluding evening schools,
23 (2) another school district, other than a county vocational school
24 district in the same county on a full-time basis, or a State college
25 demonstration school or private school to which the district of
26 residence pays tuition, or (3) a State facility in which they are
27 placed by the district; or are residents of the district and are: (1)
28 receiving home instruction, or (2) in a shared-time vocational
29 program and are regularly attending a school in the district and a
30 county vocational school district. In addition, resident enrollment
31 shall include the number of pupils who, on the last school day prior
32 to October 16 of the prebudget year, are residents of the district and
33 in a State facility in which they were placed by the State. Pupils in
34 a shared-time vocational program shall be counted on an equated
35 full-time basis in accordance with procedures to be established by
36 the commissioner. Resident enrollment shall include regardless of
37 nonresidence, the enrolled children of teaching staff members of the
38 school district or county vocational school district who are
39 permitted, by contract or local district policy, to enroll their
40 children in the educational program of the school district or county
41 vocational school district without payment of tuition. Disabled
42 children between three and five years of age and receiving programs
43 and services pursuant to N.J.S.18A:46-6 shall be included in the
44 resident enrollment of the district;

45 "School district" means any local or regional school district
46 established pursuant to chapter 8 or chapter 13 of Title 18A of the
47 New Jersey Statutes;

1 "State facility" means a State developmental center, a State
2 Division of Youth and Family Services' residential center, a State
3 residential mental health center, a Department of Children and
4 Families Regional Day School, a State training school/secure care
5 facility, a State juvenile community program, a juvenile detention
6 center or a boot camp under the supervisory authority of the
7 Juvenile Justice Commission pursuant to P.L.1995, c.284
8 (C.52:17B-169 et seq.), or an institution operated by or under
9 contract with the Department of Corrections, Children and Families
10 or Human Services, or the Juvenile Justice Commission;

11 "Statewide equalized school tax rate" means the amount
12 calculated by dividing the general fund tax levy for all school
13 districts, which excludes county vocational school districts and
14 county special services school districts as defined pursuant to this
15 section, in the State for the prebudget year by the equalized
16 valuations certified in the year prior to the prebudget year of all
17 taxing districts in the State except taxing districts for which there
18 are not school tax levies;

19 "Tax levy growth limitation" means the permitted annual
20 increase in the adjusted tax levy for a school district as calculated
21 pursuant to sections 3 and 4 of P.L.2007, c.62 (C.18A:7F-38 and
22 18A:7F-39).

23 (cf: P.L.2010, c.44, s.6)

24

25 2. Section 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54) is amended to
26 read as follows:

27 12. a. **【District factor group A and B school districts, and district**
28 **factor group CD school districts with a concentration of at-risk**
29 **pupils equal to or greater than 40%,】** A school district shall provide
30 universal access to free 【access to】 full-day preschool for all three-
31 and four-year old pupils by a date that shall be determined by the
32 district. 【All other school districts shall provide free access to full-
33 day preschool for at-risk pupils.】 A school district shall submit a
34 plan to the Commissioner of Education by July 1, 2025 that details
35 how the district will expand the provision of free access to full-day
36 preschool to all three- and four-year old pupils and by what date the
37 district determines it will provide free access to full-day preschool
38 to all three- and four-year old pupils. A school district that does not
39 offer full-day kindergarten shall include in its submission a plan for
40 the provision of full-day kindergarten. The plan shall be updated in
41 accordance with the provisions of subsection b. of this section, and
42 the commissioner may require a school district to resubmit the
43 district's plan for the provision of free access to full-day preschool
44 at any time following the initial submission. Notwithstanding the
45 provisions of this section to the contrary, any school district that
46 operates a public preschool program may apply to the commissioner
47 for approval to establish tuition for preschool services, which
48 tuition charges are to be conditional on a family's ability to pay. In

1 order to receive approval to charge tuition for preschool services,
2 the district shall demonstrate that the district's finances do not
3 support a free full-day preschool program and that establishing
4 tuition would allow the district to enroll substantially more at-risk
5 students. Any school district that has submitted a plan shall be
6 eligible to apply for and receive preschool expansion aid pursuant
7 to section 3 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature
8 as this bill) in each school year in which the district does not
9 provide free access to full-day preschool for all three- and four-year
10 old pupils. Preschool education aid shall reflect the cost of the
11 pupil's placement in either a district program, a licensed child care
12 provider program, or a Head Start Program.

13 (1) Preschool education aid shall be calculated **【**for district
14 factor group A and B school districts, and for district factor group
15 CD school districts with a concentration of at-risk pupils equal to or
16 greater than 40%,**】** as follows:

17
$$\text{Aid} = (\text{IDE} \times \text{IDA}) + (\text{PRE} \times \text{PRA}) + (\text{HSE} \times \text{HSA})$$

18 where

19 IDE is the number of district pupils, other than preschool
20 disabled pupils, in an in-district preschool program;

21 IDA is the per pupil aid amount for an in-district preschool
22 program;

23 PRE is the number of district pupils, other than preschool
24 disabled pupils, in a preschool program operated by a licensed child
25 care provider;

26 PRA is the per pupil aid amount for a preschool program
27 operated by a licensed child care provider;

28 HSE is the number of district pupils, other than preschool
29 disabled pupils, in a Head Start Program; and

30 HSA is the per pupil aid amount for a Head Start Program.

31 **【**A CD school district with a concentration of at-risk pupils equal to
32 or greater than 40% shall be eligible to receive preschool education
33 aid pursuant to the provisions of this paragraph for a minimum of
34 three school years from the time of initial determination of
35 eligibility even if the district's concentration of at-risk pupils falls
36 below a 40% concentration of at-risk pupils. In the event that the
37 district falls below a 40% concentration of at-risk pupils for two
38 consecutive school years, in the third school year the district shall
39 receive preschool education aid for each at-risk pupil and for any
40 four-year old pupil for whom the district received preschool
41 education aid in the prior school year, and that pupil shall receive
42 free preschool education.**】**

43 (2) **【**Preschool education aid shall be calculated for all other
44 districts as follows:

45
$$\text{Aid} = (\text{ARID} \times \text{IDA}) + (\text{ARP} \times \text{PRA}) + (\text{ARHS} \times \text{HSA})$$

46 where

47 ARID is the number of at-risk district pupils, other than
48 preschool disabled pupils, in an in-district preschool program;

1 IDA is the per pupil aid amount for an in-district preschool
2 program;

3 ARP is the number of at-risk district pupils, other than preschool
4 disabled pupils, in a preschool program operated by a licensed child
5 care provider;

6 PRA is the per pupil aid amount for a preschool program
7 operated by a licensed child care provider;

8 ARHS is the number of at-risk district pupils, other than
9 preschool disabled pupils, in a Head Start Program; and

10 HSA is the per pupil aid amount for a Head Start Program. **】**
11 (Deleted by amendment, P.L. _____, c. _____) (pending before the
12 Legislature as this bill)

13 b. In accordance with regulations adopted by the
14 commissioner, all districts shall submit, by July 1, 2025, a **【five-**
15 **year】** plan **【that provides for the】** to reach full implementation of
16 full-day preschool for all **【eligible】** three- and four-year olds by the
17 **【2013-2014 school year】** by a date that shall be determined by the
18 school district. For the purposes of this section, "full
19 implementation" means serving **【90%】** 90 percent of eligible pupils
20 in accordance with the preschool quality standards adopted by the
21 commissioner or such greater percentage as determined by the
22 commissioner. A school district shall annually update the **【five-**
23 **year】** plan based on actual implementation experience and shall
24 revise its pupil projections in accordance with that experience.

25 c. (1) In the case of a school district that did not receive any form
26 of preschool aid in the 2007-2008 school year, the 2008-2009
27 school year shall be a preschool planning year. Beginning in the
28 2009-2010 school year, the school district shall receive preschool
29 education aid calculated in accordance with the provisions of
30 subsection a. of this section based upon projected preschool
31 enrollment.

32 In the 2009-2010 school year the school district may also receive
33 start-up funds in accordance with regulations adopted by the
34 commissioner.

35 (2) In the case of a school district that received Early Launch to
36 Learning Initiative aid in the 2007-2008 school year, for the 2008-
37 2009 school year the district shall receive preschool education aid
38 in an amount equal to the district's allocation of Early Launch to
39 Learning Initiative aid in the 2007-2008 school year. Beginning in
40 the 2009-2010 school year, the school district shall receive
41 preschool education aid calculated in accordance with the
42 provisions of subsection a. of this section based upon projected
43 preschool enrollment.

44 In the 2009-2010 school year the school district may also receive
45 start-up funds in accordance with regulations adopted by the
46 commissioner.

1 (3) In the case of a school district that received early childhood
2 program aid in the 2007-2008 school year but did not receive
3 preschool expansion aid or education opportunity aid in that year,
4 for the 2008-2009 school year the district shall receive preschool
5 education aid equal to the greater of the district's 2007-2008 amount
6 of early childhood program aid for preschool or the district's 2007-
7 2008 per pupil allocation of early childhood program aid as
8 included in the district's original 2007-2008 budget certified for
9 taxes, inflated by the CPI, and multiplied by the district's projected
10 preschool enrollment; except that if the district is able to
11 demonstrate in the five-year plan submitted to the commissioner
12 that it has the capacity to offer a full-day three- or four-year-old
13 program, or a full-day three- and four-year-old program, in the
14 2008-2009 school year, the commissioner may approve the funding
15 of the full-day program calculated in accordance with the provisions
16 of subsection a. of this section based upon projected preschool
17 enrollment. The district shall be informed of the commissioner's
18 determination upon approval of the five-year plan. Beginning in the
19 2009-2010 school year, the school district shall receive preschool
20 education aid calculated in accordance with the provisions of
21 subsection a. of this section based upon projected preschool
22 enrollment.

23 In the 2009-2010 school year the school district may also receive
24 start-up funds in accordance with regulations adopted by the
25 commissioner.

26 (4) In the case of a school district that received preschool
27 expansion aid or education opportunity aid in the 2007-2008 school
28 year, for the 2008-2009 school year the district shall receive
29 preschool education aid in an amount equal to the preschool budget
30 approved by the commissioner for the 2008-2009 school year.
31 Preschool education aid for the 2008-2009 school year shall be
32 adjusted following receipt of the Application for State School Aid
33 in October 2008. Beginning in the 2009-2010 school year, the
34 school district shall receive preschool education aid calculated in
35 accordance with the provisions of subsection a. of this section based
36 upon projected preschool enrollment; except that for any school
37 year the district shall not receive preschool aid in an amount less
38 than either the total amount of preschool aid the district received in
39 the 2008-2009 school year after the State aid adjustment or the
40 district's 2008-2009 school year preschool per pupil aid amount
41 multiplied by the projected number of preschool pupils after the
42 State aid adjustment, whichever is greater.

43 In the 2009-2010 school year the school district may also receive
44 start-up funds in accordance with regulations adopted by the
45 commissioner.

46 (5) Notwithstanding the provisions of this subsection to the
47 contrary, beginning with the first full school year next following the
48 date of enactment of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the

1 Legislature as this bill) and for a period of five school years, a
2 school district that receives an allocation of preschool education aid
3 based on the amount of Early Launch to Learning Initiative aid
4 received in a previous school year or the amount of Early
5 Childhood Program Aid received in a previous school year shall
6 have the proportion of its preschool education aid based on the
7 amount of Early Launch to Learning Initiative aid previously
8 received or the amount of Early Childhood Program Aid previously
9 received reduced in each year and the proportion of its preschool
10 education aid calculated pursuant to subsection a. of this section
11 increased in each year. This transition shall be done in a manner
12 determined by the Commissioner of Education, except that the
13 commissioner shall ensure that at the end of five full school years
14 following the date of enactment of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending
15 before the Legislature as this bill), all school districts receive
16 allocations of preschool education aid calculated pursuant to
17 subsection a. of this section, and no school district receives an
18 allocation of preschool education aid based on the amount of Early
19 Launch to Learning Initiative aid received in a previous school year
20 or the amount of Early Childhood Program Aid received in a
21 previous school year.

22 d. For the 2008-2009 school year, the preschool per pupil aid
23 amounts shall be \$11,506 for pupils enrolled in an in-district
24 program, \$12,934 for pupils enrolled in a licensed child care
25 provider program, and \$7,146 for pupils enrolled in a Head Start
26 Program. The preschool per pupil aid amounts shall be adjusted by
27 the CPI in the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school years as required
28 pursuant to subsection b. of section 4 of this act. For subsequent
29 school years, the preschool per pupil aid amounts shall be
30 established in the Educational Adequacy Report, with the amounts
31 adjusted by the CPI for each of the two school years following the
32 first school year to which the report is applicable.

33 e. A district shall appropriate preschool education aid in a
34 special revenue fund for expenditure. In the event that any
35 preschool education aid is not expended during the budget year, the
36 aid may be carried forward in accordance with regulations adopted
37 by the commissioner.

38 f. In the event that a district has fully implemented a full-day
39 preschool program for three- and four-year old pupils in accordance
40 with its five-year plan and meets the preschool quality standards or
41 has provided preschool education to the number of eligible students
42 to be served during a school year in accordance with that plan and
43 its annual updates and the preschool quality standards, the district
44 may appropriate preschool education aid **【to support kindergarten**
45 **through grade 12 or to provide preschool education for three- and**
46 **four-year old pupils for whom the district is not required to provide**
47 **preschool education upon the approval of the commissioner】** for
48 additional purposes that may be designated by the commissioner,

1 which purposes shall include, but need not be limited to, providing
2 summer programming for preschool students, professional
3 development for preschool staff, and preschool facilities
4 improvements. The district shall request approval in its annual plan
5 update and any approval granted by the commissioner shall be made
6 during the annual school budget process.

7 g. A school district shall maintain the preschool quality
8 standards as adopted by the commissioner as a condition of receipt
9 of preschool education aid.

10 h. The commissioner shall prepare and make public a Statewide
11 strategic plan to achieve full implementation of full-day preschool
12 education. The plan shall be based on the plans submitted by each
13 school district pursuant to subsection a. of this section. The plan
14 shall be posted on the department's Internet website and shall be
15 submitted to the Governor, and to the Legislature pursuant to
16 section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1) no later than July 1,
17 2026.

18 (cf: P.L.2007, c.260, s.12)

19
20 3. (New section) a. A school district shall be eligible to apply
21 for and receive preschool expansion aid if the district provides full-
22 day kindergarten at the time of application and meets any other
23 criteria the Commissioner of Education deems appropriate. The
24 commissioner may waive the requirement for a district to offer full-
25 day kindergarten if there is sufficient funding to offer additional
26 preschool expansion aid awards.

27 b. In determining preschool expansion aid award amounts and
28 recipients, the commissioner shall give preference to districts in
29 accordance with the concentration of at-risk pupils, as defined in
30 section 3 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-45).

31 c. The Department of Education, the Department of Children and
32 Families, and the Department of Human Services shall maintain on
33 the departments' Internet websites a page that includes;

34 (1) a list of all districts receiving preschool education aid for the
35 school year;

36 (2) a list of all districts eligible to apply for preschool expansion
37 aid for the school year;

38 (3) a list of all licensed child care providers and Head Start
39 programs in each district's community, as well as in neighboring
40 communities; and

41 (4) the contact information for all district-operated preschool
42 programs, licensed child care providers, and Head Start programs.
43 The department shall update the required information for each
44 school year no later than July 14 of each year.

45
46 4. (New section) a. A school district that receives preschool
47 education aid pursuant to section 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-
48 54) or preschool expansion aid pursuant to section 3 of

1 P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill)
2 shall implement a mixed delivery method, whereby a mix of district
3 programs, licensed child care provider programs, and Head Start
4 Programs are utilized in the delivery of preschool education. In
5 establishing a mixed delivery method, a school district shall partner
6 with any licensed child care provider that is able to demonstrate an
7 ability to meet the Elements of High Quality Preschool Programs
8 promulgated by the Department of Education and all applicable
9 Preschool Program Implementation Guidelines. The district shall
10 ensure that free preschool opportunities are first provided to at-risk
11 pupils, as defined in section 3 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-45).

12 b. A school district that receives preschool education aid shall
13 provide to a licensed child care provider with which it partners to
14 deliver preschool education, payments that shall be based on the
15 maximum number of contracted seats agreed upon by the school
16 district and the licensed child care provider, provided that average
17 provider enrollment exceeds 95 percent of contracted slots and that
18 providers are permitted to enroll children directly via a centralized
19 system shared with the district in which the licensed child care
20 provider is operating. The payments to a licensed child care
21 provider pursuant to this subsection shall not, during the term of the
22 preschool education program contract, be adjusted based on average
23 daily enrollment or average daily attendance.

24
25 5. The Department of Education, the Department of Children
26 and Families, and the Department of Human Services shall, in
27 consultation with school districts, licensed child care providers,
28 Head Start program providers, and other stakeholders identified by
29 the Commissioner of Education, submit a report to the Legislature
30 pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1) no later
31 than March 1 next following the date of enactment of P.L. , c.
32 (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill) on the status
33 of preschool education in the State and the efficacy of the mixed
34 delivery method of preschool education. The Department of
35 Education may utilize up to \$250,000 of any appropriation for
36 preschool education aid to contract temporary staff to assist with the
37 preparation of the report issued pursuant to this section.

38
39 6. This act shall take effect immediately.

40

41

42

STATEMENT

43

44 This bill defines preschool expansion aid, establishes eligibility
45 criteria for the aid, and creates requirements for recipients of
46 preschool expansion aid. Additionally, the bill makes changes to the
47 calculation of preschool education aid.

1 Under current law, school districts are required to provide certain
2 thresholds of free preschool education opportunities based on the
3 district's district factor group (DFG) and concentration of at-risk
4 students. DFGs are determined using multiple indicators of
5 socioeconomic status, including attainment rates for high school
6 diplomas and college education, occupational status, unemployment
7 rate, poverty rate, and median family income. DFGs have not been
8 updated since 2004.

9 This bill removes the distinction between DFGs for both the
10 determination of preschool education aid and the thresholds of free
11 preschool education opportunities that are required under current
12 law. Under the bill, all districts would be required to provide free
13 preschool education opportunities for all three- and four-year old
14 pupils in the district, to the extent possible based on the amount of
15 preschool education aid provided to the district, by a date
16 determined by each school district. The Commissioner of
17 Education may require a school district to resubmit the district's
18 plan for the provision of free access to full-day preschool at any
19 time following the initial submission. The bill allows any district
20 that operates a preschool program to apply to the commissioner for
21 approval to establish tuition based on a family's ability to pay if the
22 district is able to demonstrate that the district's finances would not
23 support a free full-day preschool program and that establishing
24 tuition would allow the district to enroll substantially more at-risk
25 students. Under the bill, preschool expansion aid would be
26 provided to a district in any year in which free preschool
27 opportunities are not provided to all three- and four- year olds in the
28 district.

29 The bill provides that each school district is required to submit a
30 plan to the Commissioner of Education by July 1, 2025 to reach free
31 access to full-day preschool for all three- and four-year old pupils
32 by a date determined by the district. A school district that does not
33 offer full-day kindergarten is to include in its submission a plan for
34 the provision of full-day kindergarten. Subsequently, the
35 commissioner is required to prepare and make public a Statewide
36 strategic plan to achieve full implementation of full-day preschool
37 education. The plan is to be based on the plans submitted by each
38 school district and is required to be posted on the department's
39 Internet website and submitted to the Governor, and to the
40 Legislature no later than July 1, 2026.

41 Preschool expansion aid is defined under the bill as any portion
42 of Preschool Education Aid allocated by the Commissioner of
43 Education for the purpose of expanding free access to preschool for
44 resident three- and four-year old children, or any other State funds
45 appropriated for the same purpose. To be eligible to receive
46 preschool expansion aid, a district is required to offer full-day
47 kindergarten, however, the commissioner may waive this
48 requirement if there is sufficient funding. In determining preschool

1 expansion aid award amounts and recipients, the commissioner is to
2 give preference to districts in accordance with the concentration of
3 at-risk students.

4 Recipients of preschool expansion aid would be required to
5 implement a mixed delivery method, whereby a mix of district
6 programs, licensed child care provider programs, and Head Start
7 Programs are utilized in the delivery of preschool education. In
8 establishing a mixed delivery method, a school district is to partner
9 with any licensed child care provider that is able to demonstrate an
10 ability to meet the Elements of High Quality Preschool Programs
11 promulgated by the Department of Education and all applicable
12 Preschool Program Implementation Guidelines. The district is
13 required to ensure that free preschool opportunities are first
14 provided to at-risk students. In addition, a school district is
15 required under the bill to provide payments to a partnering licensed
16 child care provider that are only based on the contracted number of
17 seats agreed upon by the school district and the licensed child care
18 provider, provided that average provider enrollment exceeds 95
19 percent of contracted slots and providers are permitted to enroll
20 children directly via a centralized system shared with the district in
21 which the licensed child care provider is operating.

22 Finally, the bill requires the Department of Education, the
23 Department of Children and Families, and the Department of
24 Human Services, in consultation with school districts, licensed child
25 care providers, Head Start program providers, and other
26 stakeholders, to submit a report to the Legislature regarding the
27 status of preschool education in the State and the efficacy of the
28 mixed delivery method of preschool education.

SENATE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR
SENATE, No. 3910

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
221st LEGISLATURE

ADOPTED MAY 12, 2025

Sponsored by:

Senator M. TERESA RUIZ

District 29 (Essex and Hudson)

Senator SHIRLEY K. TURNER

District 15 (Hunterdon and Mercer)

Co-Sponsored by:

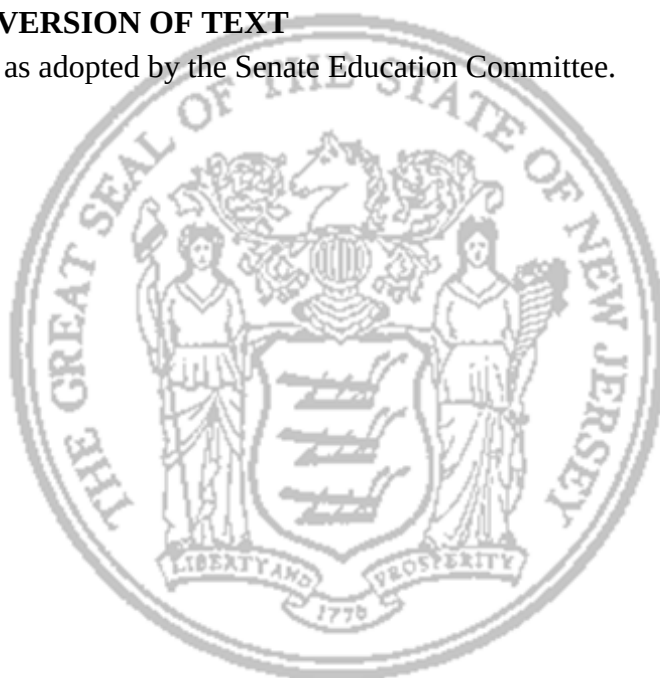
Senators McKnight and Burgess

SYNOPSIS

Makes various changes to provision of preschool aid and facilities requirements; establishes Universal Preschool Implementation Steering Committee; requires full-day kindergarten in all school districts.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Substitute as adopted by the Senate Education Committee.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 6/26/2025)

1 **AN ACT** concerning early childhood education, amending various
2 parts of the statutory law, and supplementing P.L.2007, c.260.

3

4 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
5 of New Jersey:

6

7 1. (New section) Sections 1 and 2, 6 through 12, and 15 of this
8 act shall be known and may be cited as the “New Jersey Universal
9 Preschool and Kindergarten Act.”

10

11 2. (New section) The Legislature finds and declares that:

12 a. Research is clear that high-quality preschool can change the
13 educational trajectories of young children, particularly
14 economically disadvantaged children and multilingual learners.
15 Improvements in literacy, numeracy, social-emotional and self-
16 regulatory development, and lifetime earnings have been
17 demonstrated among individuals who attend high-quality preschool
18 compared to their peers.

19 b. New Jersey leads the nation in expanding access to high-
20 quality preschool opportunities. The State has achieved a unique
21 and world-class combination of significant financial investment and
22 rigorous quality standards. New Jersey State-funded preschools are
23 required to serve three- and four-year olds in full-day programs
24 featuring small class sizes led by quality instructors with ample
25 curriculum support, professional development, and accommodations
26 for students with special needs. New Jersey’s State spending on
27 preschool is among the highest in the country, with clear,
28 significant impacts on our public school system: tens of thousands
29 of three- and four-year olds in hundreds of communities around the
30 State attend transformative high-quality early education programs.

31 c. District-operated preschool programs, licensed childcare
32 centers, and Head Start programs form an interrelated and
33 interdependent early childhood ecosystem. Each component is made
34 stronger by the other, and the system is greater and more impactful
35 than the sum of its parts. No component can reach its full potential
36 without the facilities, staff, resources, and expertise of the others.
37 Together, the system represents a continuum of education and care
38 services from birth through age five necessary not only for children
39 to realize their full life potential, but for families to participate fully
40 in economic and civic society. To lift up this system is a moral and
41 economic imperative.

42 d. To build on the State’s preschool expansion progress to date
43 and to realize the full benefits of high-quality preschool, it is fitting
44 and proper for the State to enshrine certain policies and values in
45 State law, including:

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [thus] in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

- 1 (1) providing sustainable, annual financial support for
2 expanding access to high-quality preschool;
- 3 (2) codifying preschool education aid provisions previously
4 implemented through language in various annual appropriations
5 acts and harmonizing New Jersey law accordingly;
- 6 (3) prioritizing expansion for economically disadvantaged
7 families and communities;
- 8 (4) requiring State-funded preschool programs to make every
9 effort to partner with local ready, willing, and able licensed
10 childcare providers and Head Start programs; and
- 11 (5) conducting ongoing evaluations of the State's approach to
12 early childhood and preschool education to ensure that policy
13 continues to reflect stakeholder expertise and evolving research.
- 14 e. In addition to high-quality preschool education, full-day
15 kindergarten is necessary not only to unlock a child's full learning
16 potential, but to facilitate a smooth transition from high-quality
17 preschool into elementary programs.
- 18
- 19 3. Section 3 of P.L.2007, c.62 (C.18A:7F-38) is amended to read
20 as follows:
- 21 3. a. Notwithstanding the provisions of any other law to the
22 contrary, a school district shall not adopt a budget pursuant to
23 sections 5 and 6 of P.L.1996, c.138 (C.18A:7F-5 and 18A:7F-6)
24 with an increase in its adjusted tax levy that exceeds, except as
25 provided in subsection e. of section 4 of P.L.2007, c.62 (C.18A:7F-
26 39), the tax levy growth limitation calculated as follows: the sum of
27 the prebudget year adjusted tax levy and the adjustment for
28 increases in enrollment multiplied by 2.0 percent, and adjustments
29 for an increase in health care costs, increases in amounts for certain
30 normal and accrued liability pension contributions set forth in
31 sections 1 and 2 of P.L.2009, c.19 amending section 24 of
32 P.L.1954, c.84 (C.43:15A-24) and section 15 of P.L.1944, c.255
33 (C.43:16A-15) for the year set forth in those sections, **[and,]** in the
34 case of an SDA district as defined pursuant to section 3 of
35 P.L.2000, c.72 (C.18A:7G-3), during the 2018-2019 through the
36 2024-2025 school years, increases to raise a general fund tax levy to
37 an amount that does not exceed its local share , and, in the case of a
38 school district first receiving preschool education aid in the 2025-
39 2026, 2026-2027, or 2027-2028 school years and participating in
40 the pilot program established by the commissioner pursuant to
41 subsection h. of 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54), increases to
42 raise a general fund tax levy for the local share of preschool
43 education costs.
- 44 b. (1) The allowable adjustment for increases in enrollment
45 authorized pursuant to subsection a. of this section shall equal the
46 per pupil prebudget year adjusted tax levy multiplied by EP, where
47 EP equals the sum of:

1 (a) 0.50 for each unit of weighted resident enrollment that
2 constitutes an increase from the prebudget year over 1%, but not
3 more than 2.5%;

4 (b) 0.75 for each unit of weighted resident enrollment that
5 constitutes an increase from the prebudget year over 2.5%, but not
6 more than 4%; and

7 (c) 1.00 for each unit of weighted resident enrollment that
8 constitutes an increase from the prebudget year over 4%.

9 (2) A school district may request approval from the
10 commissioner to calculate EP equal to 1.00 for any increase in
11 weighted resident enrollment if it can demonstrate that the
12 calculation pursuant to paragraph (1) of this subsection would result
13 in an average class size that exceeds 10% above the facilities
14 efficiency standards established pursuant to P.L.2000, c.72
15 (C.18A:7G-1 et al.).

16 c. (Deleted by amendment, P.L.2010, c.44)

17 d. (1) The allowable adjustment for increases in health care costs
18 authorized pursuant to subsection a. of this section shall equal that
19 portion of the actual increase in total health care costs for the
20 budget year, less any withdrawals from the current expense
21 emergency reserve account for increases in total health care costs,
22 that exceeds 2.0 percent of the total health care costs in the
23 prebudget year, but that is not in excess of the product of the total
24 health care costs in the prebudget year multiplied by the average
25 percentage increase of the State Health Benefits Program, P.L.1961,
26 c.49 (C.52:14-17.25 et seq.), as annually determined by the
27 Division of Pensions and Benefits in the Department of the
28 Treasury.

29 (2) The allowable adjustment for increases in the amount of
30 normal and accrued liability pension contributions authorized
31 pursuant to subsection a. of this section shall equal that portion of
32 the actual increase in total normal and accrued liability pension
33 contributions for the budget year that exceeds 2.0 percent of the
34 total normal and accrued liability pension contributions in the
35 prebudget year.

36 (3) In the case of an SDA district, as defined pursuant to section
37 3 of P.L.2000, c.72 (C.18A:7G-3), in which the prebudget year
38 adjusted tax levy is less than the school district's prebudget year
39 local share as calculated pursuant to section 10 of P.L.2007, c.260
40 (C.18A:7F-52), the allowable adjustment for increases to raise a tax
41 levy that does not exceed the school district's local share shall equal
42 the difference between the prebudget year adjusted tax levy and the
43 prebudget year local share.

44 (4) In the case of a school district first receiving preschool
45 education aid in the 2025-2026, 2026-2027, or 2027-2028 school
46 years and participating in the pilot program established by the
47 commissioner pursuant to subsection h. of 12 of P.L.2007, c.260
48 (C.18A:7F-54), the allowable adjustment for increases to raise a

1 general fund tax levy for the local share of preschool education
2 costs shall be equal to the actual increase required to provide
3 preschool education under the pilot program less State aid provided
4 pursuant to subsection h. of 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54).

5 A school district first receiving preschool education aid in the
6 2025-2026 school year and participating in the pilot program
7 established by the commissioner pursuant to subsection h. of 12 of
8 P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54) may, prior to the delivery of tax
9 bills pursuant to R.S.54:4-64, recertify to the county board of
10 taxation the sum to be raised in the district during the ensuing
11 school year if the change in the amount to be raised is equal to the
12 district's local share of preschool education costs for that school
13 year.

14 e. (Deleted by amendment, P.L.2010, c.44)

15 f. The adjusted tax levy shall be increased or decreased
16 accordingly whenever the responsibility and associated cost of a
17 school district activity is transferred to another school district or
18 governmental entity.

19 (cf: P.L.2018, c.67, s.6)

20

21 4. Section 3 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-45) is amended to
22 read as follows:

23 3. As used in **[this act]** P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-43 et al.)
24 and P.L.1996, c.138 (C.18A:7F-1 et al.), unless the context clearly
25 requires a different meaning:

26 "At-risk pupils" means those resident pupils from households
27 with a household income at or below the most recent federal
28 poverty guidelines available on October 15 of the prebudget year
29 multiplied by 1.85;

30 "Base per pupil amount" means the cost per elementary pupil of
31 delivering the core curriculum content standards and extracurricular
32 and cocurricular activities necessary for a thorough and efficient
33 education;

34 "Bilingual education pupil" means a resident pupil enrolled in a
35 program of bilingual education or in an English as a second
36 language program approved by the State Board of Education;

37 "Budgeted local share" means the district's local tax levy
38 contained in the budget certified for taxation purposes;

39 "Capital outlay" means capital outlay as defined in GAAP;

40 "Combination pupil" means a resident pupil who is both an at-
41 risk pupil and a bilingual education pupil;

42 "Commissioner" means the Commissioner of Education;

43 "Concentration of at-risk pupils" shall be based on prebudget
44 year pupil data and means, for a school district or a county
45 vocational school district, the number of at-risk pupils among those
46 counted in resident enrollment, divided by resident enrollment;

1 "County special services school district" means any entity
2 established pursuant to article 8 of chapter 46 of Title 18A of the
3 New Jersey Statutes;

4 "County vocational school district" means any entity established
5 pursuant to article 3 of chapter 54 of Title 18A of the New Jersey
6 Statutes;

7 "CPI" means the increase, expressed as a decimal, in the average
8 annualized consumer price index for the New York City and
9 Philadelphia areas in the fiscal year preceding the prebudget year
10 relative to the previous fiscal year as reported by the United States
11 Department of Labor;

12 "Debt service" means payments of principal and interest upon
13 school bonds and other obligations issued to finance the purchase or
14 construction of school facilities, additions to school facilities, or the
15 reconstruction, remodeling, alteration, modernization, renovation or
16 repair of school facilities, including furnishings, equipment,
17 architect fees, and the costs of issuance of such obligations and
18 shall include payments of principal and interest upon bonds
19 heretofore issued to fund or refund such obligations, and upon
20 municipal bonds and other obligations which the commissioner
21 approves as having been issued for such purposes;

22 "District income" means the aggregate income of the residents of
23 the taxing district or taxing districts, based upon data provided by
24 the Division of Taxation in the New Jersey Department of the
25 Treasury and contained on the New Jersey State Income Tax forms
26 for the calendar year ending two years prior to the prebudget year.
27 The commissioner may supplement data contained on the State
28 Income Tax forms with data available from other State or federal
29 agencies in order to better correlate the data to that collected on the
30 federal census. With respect to regional districts and their
31 constituent districts, however, the district income as described
32 above shall be allocated among the regional and constituent districts
33 in proportion to the number of pupils resident in each of them;

34 "Equalized valuation" means the equalized valuation of the
35 taxing district or taxing districts, as certified by the Director of the
36 Division of Taxation on October 1, or subsequently revised by the
37 tax court by January 15, of the prebudget year. With respect to
38 regional districts and their constituent districts, however, the
39 equalized valuations as described above shall be allocated among
40 the regional and constituent districts in proportion to the number of
41 pupils resident in each of them. In the event that the equalized table
42 certified by the director shall be revised by the tax court after
43 January 15 of the prebudget year, the revised valuations shall be
44 used in the recomputation of aid for an individual school district
45 filing an appeal, but shall have no effect upon the calculation of the
46 property value rate, Statewide average equalized school tax rate, or
47 Statewide equalized total tax rate;

1 "Full-day preschool" means a preschool day consisting of a
2 minimum six-hour comprehensive educational program in
3 accordance with the district's kindergarten through grade 12 school
4 calendar;

5 "GAAP" means the generally accepted accounting principles
6 established by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board as
7 prescribed by the State board pursuant to N.J.S.18A:4-14;

8 "General special education services pupil" means a pupil
9 receiving specific services pursuant to chapter 46 of Title 18A of
10 the New Jersey Statutes;

11 "Geographic cost adjustment" means an adjustment that reflects
12 county differences in the cost of providing educational services that
13 are outside the control of the district;

14 "Household income" means income as defined in 7 CFR ss.245.2
15 and 245.6 or any subsequent superseding federal law or regulation;

16 "Net budget" means the sum of the district's general fund tax
17 levy, State aid received pursuant to the provisions of this act other
18 than preschool education aid, miscellaneous revenue estimated
19 pursuant to GAAP, and designated general fund balance;

20 **["Prebudget year" means the school fiscal year preceding the**
21 **year in which the school budget is implemented;]**

22 "Nonpreschool ECPA" means the amount of early childhood
23 program aid, excluding prior year carry-forward amounts, included
24 in a district's 2007-2008 school year budget certified for taxes that
25 was allocated to grades K through 3;

26 "Prebudget year" means the school fiscal year preceding the year
27 in which the school budget is implemented;

28 "Preschool expansion grant" means any grant funded by a
29 portion of preschool education aid allocated by the Commissioner
30 of Education or any other State funds appropriated for the purpose
31 of expanding free access to high-quality preschool for resident
32 three- and four-year old children in districts that do not, at the time
33 of application for a grant, provide State-funded, high-quality, free
34 preschool programs;

35 "Report" means the Educational Adequacy Report issued by the
36 commissioner pursuant to section 4 of this act;

37 "Resident enrollment" means the number of pupils other than
38 preschool pupils, post-graduate pupils, and post-secondary
39 vocational pupils who, on the last school day prior to October 16 of
40 the current school year, are residents of the district and are enrolled
41 in: (1) the public schools of the district, excluding evening schools,
42 (2) another school district, other than a county vocational school
43 district in the same county on a full-time basis, or a State college
44 demonstration school or private school to which the district of
45 residence pays tuition, or (3) a State facility in which they are
46 placed by the district; or are residents of the district and are: (1)
47 receiving home instruction, or (2) in a shared-time vocational
48 program and are regularly attending a school in the district and a

1 county vocational school district. In addition, resident enrollment
2 shall include the number of pupils who, on the last school day prior
3 to October 16 of the prebudget year, are residents of the district and
4 in a State facility in which they were placed by the State. Pupils in
5 a shared-time vocational program shall be counted on an equated
6 full-time basis in accordance with procedures to be established by
7 the commissioner. Resident enrollment shall include regardless of
8 nonresidence, the enrolled children of teaching staff members of the
9 school district or county vocational school district who are
10 permitted, by contract or local district policy, to enroll their
11 children in the educational program of the school district or county
12 vocational school district without payment of tuition. Disabled
13 children between three and five years of age and receiving programs
14 and services pursuant to N.J.S.18A:46-6 shall be included in the
15 resident enrollment of the district;

16 "School district" means any local or regional school district
17 established pursuant to chapter 8 or chapter 13 of Title 18A of the
18 New Jersey Statutes;

19 "State facility" means a State developmental center, a State
20 Division of Youth and Family Services' residential center, a State
21 residential mental health center, a Department of Children and
22 Families Regional Day School, a State training school/secure care
23 facility, a State juvenile community program, a juvenile detention
24 center or a boot camp under the supervisory authority of the
25 Youth Justice Commission pursuant to P.L.1995, c.284 (C.52:17B-
26 169 et seq.), or an institution operated by or under contract with the
27 Department of Corrections, Children and Families or Human
28 Services, or the Youth Justice Commission;

29 "Statewide equalized school tax rate" means the amount
30 calculated by dividing the general fund tax levy for all school
31 districts, which excludes county vocational school districts and
32 county special services school districts as defined pursuant to this
33 section, in the State for the prebudget year by the equalized
34 valuations certified in the year prior to the prebudget year of all
35 taxing districts in the State except taxing districts for which there
36 are not school tax levies;

37 "Tax levy growth limitation" means the permitted annual
38 increase in the adjusted tax levy for a school district as calculated
39 pursuant to sections 3 and 4 of P.L.2007, c.62 (C.18A:7F-38 and
40 18A:7F-39).

41 (cf: P.L.2025, c.35, s.37)

42

43 5. Section 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54) is amended to
44 read as follows:

45 12. a. **【**District factor group A and B school districts, and district
46 factor group CD school districts with a concentration of at-risk
47 pupils equal to or greater than 40%, shall provide free access to
48 full-day preschool for all three- and four-year old pupils. All other

1 school districts shall provide free access to full-day preschool for
2 at-risk pupils. Preschool education aid shall reflect the cost of the
3 pupil's placement in either a district program, a licensed child care
4 provider program, or a Head Start Program.】 (Deleted by
5 amendment, P.L. , c.) (pending before the Legislature as this
6 bill)

7 (1) 【Preschool】 In the case of a school district that received
8 preschool education aid in the 2024-2025 school year, preschool
9 education aid shall be calculated 【for district factor group A and B
10 school districts, and for district factor group CD school districts
11 with a concentration of at-risk pupils equal to or greater than 40%,】
12 as follows:

13
$$\text{Aid} = (\text{IDE} \times \text{IDA}) + (\text{PRE} \times \text{PRA}) + (\text{HSE} \times \text{HSA})$$

14 where

15 IDE is the 【number】 projected FTE enrollment for the upcoming
16 school year of district pupils, other than preschool disabled pupils,
17 in an in-district preschool program;

18 IDA is the per pupil aid amount for an in-district preschool
19 program;

20 PRE is the 【number】 projected FTE enrollment for the upcoming
21 school year of district pupils, other than preschool disabled pupils,
22 in a preschool program operated by a licensed child care provider;

23 PRA is the per pupil aid amount for a preschool program
24 operated by a licensed child care provider;

25 HSE is the 【number】 projected FTE enrollment for the
26 upcoming school year of district pupils, other than preschool
27 disabled pupils, in a Head Start Program; and

28 HSA is the per pupil aid amount for a Head Start Program.

29 【A CD school district with a concentration of at-risk pupils equal to
30 or greater than 40% shall be eligible to receive preschool education
31 aid pursuant to the provisions of this paragraph for a minimum of
32 three school years from the time of initial determination of
33 eligibility even if the district's concentration of at-risk pupils falls
34 below a 40% concentration of at-risk pupils. In the event that the
35 district falls below a 40% concentration of at-risk pupils for two
36 consecutive school years, in the third school year the district shall
37 receive preschool education aid for each at-risk pupil and for any
38 four-year old pupil for whom the district received preschool
39 education aid in the prior school year, and that pupil shall receive
40 free preschool education.】

41 (2) 【Preschool education aid shall be calculated for all other
42 districts as follows:

43
$$\text{Aid} = (\text{ARID} \times \text{IDA}) + (\text{ARP} \times \text{PRA}) + (\text{ARHS} \times \text{HSA})$$

44 where

45 ARID is the number of at-risk district pupils, other than
46 preschool disabled pupils, in an in-district preschool program;

1 IDA is the per pupil aid amount for an in-district preschool
2 program;

3 ARP is the number of at-risk district pupils, other than preschool
4 disabled pupils, in a preschool program operated by a licensed child
5 care provider;

6 PRA is the per pupil aid amount for a preschool program
7 operated by a licensed child care provider;

8 ARHS is the number of at-risk district pupils, other than
9 preschool disabled pupils, in a Head Start Program; and

10 HSA is the per pupil aid amount for a Head Start Program.】
11 (Deleted by amendment, P.L. , c.) (pending before the
12 Legislature as this bill)

13 b. 【In accordance with regulations adopted by the
14 commissioner, all districts shall submit a five-year plan that
15 provides for the full implementation of full-day preschool for all
16 eligible three- and four-year olds by the 2013-2014 school year. For
17 the purposes of this section, "full implementation" means serving
18 90% of eligible pupils in accordance with the preschool quality
19 standards adopted by the commissioner or such greater percentage
20 as determined by the commissioner. A school district shall annually
21 update the five-year plan based on actual implementation
22 experience and shall revise its pupil projections in accordance with
23 that experience.】 (Deleted by amendment, P.L. , c.) (pending
24 before the Legislature as this bill)

25 c. (1) 【In the case of a school district that did not receive any
26 form of preschool aid in the 2007-2008 school year, the 2008-2009
27 school year shall be a preschool planning year. Beginning in the
28 2009-2010 school year, the school district shall receive preschool
29 education aid calculated in accordance with the provisions of
30 subsection a. of this section based upon projected preschool
31 enrollment.

32 In the 2009-2010 school year the school district may also receive
33 start-up funds in accordance with regulations adopted by the
34 commissioner.】 (Deleted by amendment, P.L. , c.) (pending
35 before the Legislature as this bill)

36 (2) In the case of a school district that received Early Launch to
37 Learning Initiative aid in the 2007-2008 school year, 【for the 2008-
38 2009 school year the district shall receive preschool education aid
39 in an amount equal to the district's allocation of Early Launch to
40 Learning Initiative aid in the 2007-2008 school year. Beginning in
41 the 2009-2010 school year,】 the school district shall receive
42 preschool education aid calculated in accordance with the
43 provisions of paragraph (1) of subsection a. of this section 【based
44 upon projected preschool enrollment.

45 In the 2009-2010 school year the school district may also receive
46 start-up funds in accordance with regulations adopted by the
47 commissioner】 pending a determination by the commissioner that

1 the district is prepared to meet all program requirements for high-
2 quality preschool pursuant to regulations adopted by the
3 commissioner.

4 (3) In the case of a school district that received early childhood
5 program aid in the 2007-2008 school year but did not receive
6 preschool expansion aid or education opportunity aid in that year,
7 **【**for the 2008-2009 school year the district shall receive preschool
8 education aid equal to the greater of the district's 2007-2008 amount
9 of early childhood program aid for preschool or the district's 2007-
10 2008 per pupil allocation of early childhood program aid as
11 included in the district's original 2007-2008 budget certified for
12 taxes, inflated by the CPI, and multiplied by the district's projected
13 preschool enrollment; except that if the district is able to
14 demonstrate in the five-year plan submitted to the commissioner
15 that it has the capacity to offer a full-day three- or four-year-old
16 program, or a full-day three- and four-year-old program, in the
17 2008-2009 school year, the commissioner may approve the funding
18 of the full-day program calculated in accordance with the provisions
19 of subsection a. of this section based upon projected preschool
20 enrollment. The district shall be informed of the commissioner's
21 determination upon approval of the five-year plan. Beginning in the
22 2009-2010 school year, **】** the school district shall receive preschool
23 education aid calculated in accordance with the provisions of
24 paragraph (1) of subsection a. of this section **【**based upon projected
25 preschool enrollment.

26 In the 2009-2010 school year the school district may also receive
27 start-up funds in accordance with regulations adopted by the
28 commissioner **】** pending a determination by the commissioner that
29 the district is prepared to meet all program requirements for high-
30 quality preschool pursuant to regulations adopted by the
31 commissioner.

32 (4) **【**In the case of a school district that received preschool
33 expansion aid or education opportunity aid in the 2007-2008 school
34 year, for the 2008-2009 school year the district shall receive
35 preschool education aid in an amount equal to the preschool budget
36 approved by the commissioner for the 2008-2009 school year.
37 Preschool education aid for the 2008-2009 school year shall be
38 adjusted following receipt of the Application for State School Aid
39 in October 2008. Beginning in the 2009-2010 school year, the
40 school district shall receive preschool education aid calculated in
41 accordance with the provisions of subsection a. of this section based
42 upon projected preschool enrollment; except that for any school
43 year the district shall not receive preschool aid in an amount less
44 than either the total amount of preschool aid the district received in
45 the 2008-2009 school year after the State aid adjustment or the
46 district's 2008-2009 school year preschool per pupil aid amount

1 multiplied by the projected number of preschool pupils after the
2 State aid adjustment, whichever is greater.

3 In the 2009-2010 school year the school district may also receive
4 start-up funds in accordance with regulations adopted by the
5 commissioner.】 (Deleted by amendment, P.L. , c.) (pending
6 before the Legislature as this bill)

7 d. For the 2008-2009 school year, the preschool per pupil aid
8 amounts shall be \$11,506 for pupils enrolled in an in-district
9 program, \$12,934 for pupils enrolled in a licensed child care
10 provider program, and \$7,146 for pupils enrolled in a Head Start
11 Program. The preschool per pupil aid amounts shall be adjusted by
12 the CPI in the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school years as required
13 pursuant to subsection b. of section 4 of this act. For subsequent
14 school years, the preschool per pupil aid amounts shall be
15 established in the Educational Adequacy Report, with the amounts
16 adjusted by the CPI for each of the two school years following the
17 first school year to which the report is applicable.

18 e. A district shall appropriate preschool education aid in a
19 special revenue fund for expenditure. In the event that any
20 preschool education aid is not expended during the budget year, the
21 aid may be carried forward in accordance with regulations adopted
22 by the commissioner.

23 f. In the event that a district has fully implemented a full-day
24 preschool program for three- and four-year old pupils 【in
25 accordance with its five-year plan】 and meets the preschool quality
26 standards or has provided preschool education to the number of
27 eligible students to be served during a school year in accordance
28 with 【that plan and its annual updates and】 the preschool quality
29 standards, the district may appropriate preschool education aid 【to
30 support kindergarten through grade 12 or to provide preschool
31 education for three- and four-year old pupils for whom the district
32 is not required to provide preschool education upon the approval of
33 the commissioner. The district shall request approval in its annual
34 plan update and any approval granted by the commissioner shall be
35 made during the annual school budget process】 for additional
36 purposes that may be designated by the commissioner, which
37 purposes shall include, but not be limited to, providing summer
38 programming for preschool students, professional development for
39 preschool staff, preschool facilities improvements, and
40 transportation services for preschool pupils.

41 g. A school district shall maintain the preschool quality
42 standards as adopted by the commissioner as a condition of receipt
43 of preschool education aid.

44 h. In the case of a school district that first receives preschool
45 education aid in the 2025-2026, 2026-2027, or 2027-2028 school
46 years, the aid shall be provided, within the limit of available
47 appropriations, pursuant to a three-year pilot program established

1 by the commissioner that includes a cost sharing methodology
2 between the State and the school district such that the amount of
3 preschool education aid allocated to the district shall be calculated
4 by multiplying the district aid percentage by the amount calculated
5 pursuant to the formula in paragraph (1) of subsection a. of this
6 section, where the district aid percentage shall be equal to the
7 greater of the district aid percentage as defined pursuant to section 3
8 of P.L.2000, c.72 (C.18A:7G-3) or 40 percent of eligible costs.

9 i. A school district receiving preschool education aid shall
10 obtain approval by the Commissioner of Education, in a manner
11 prescribed by the commissioner, prior to implementing any
12 significant redistribution, as defined by the commissioner, of State-
13 funded preschool seats among district-operated programs, licensed
14 child care providers, and Head Start programs.

15 (cf: P.L.2007, c.260, s.12)

16
17 6. (New section) a. The Department of Education shall, within
18 the limit of funds appropriated, annually provide at least one
19 opportunity to award preschool expansion grants in accordance with
20 the provisions of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the
21 Legislature as this bill). A school district shall be eligible to apply
22 for and receive a preschool expansion grant if the district provides
23 full-day kindergarten at the time of application and meets any other
24 criteria the Commissioner of Education deems appropriate. An
25 eligible school district shall submit an application to the
26 commissioner, in a manner and form determined by the
27 commissioner, which application shall include, but not be limited
28 to, the following:

29 (1) a general overview of the district's proposed preschool
30 program operational plan;

31 (2) enrollment projections for preschool students, other than
32 preschool students with disabilities, for the next five years;

33 (3) a description of the district's proposed preschool curriculum;

34 (4) a description of intended strategies to ensure the inclusion of
35 preschool children with disabilities in general education settings to
36 the maximum extent possible;

37 (5) a description of intended strategies to annually identify and
38 recruit families of at-risk pupils and other hard-to-reach
39 populations, and subsequently ensure these children receive priority
40 placement in the preschool program;

41 (6) a demonstration of due diligence to partner with all ready,
42 willing, and able licensed child care providers and Head Start
43 programs in the district's immediate and neighboring communities;

44 (7) an analysis of community need and the potential impact of a
45 mixed delivery model of preschool education in a format
46 determined by the commissioner or, if the applicant does not
47 propose a mixed delivery model, justification for the decision not to
48 do so, which justification shall include evidence that the district has

1 adequate facility and staffing resources to implement high-quality
2 preschool education without a mixed delivery model; and

3 (8) a description of the strategies the district has in place for
4 serving eligible preschool students, with a five-year plan to serve 90
5 percent of the district's universe of three- and four-year olds.

6 b. In determining preschool expansion grant amounts and
7 recipients, the commissioner shall give preference to districts in
8 accordance with the concentration of at-risk pupils, as defined in
9 section 3 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-45). Preference given
10 pursuant to this subsection shall ensure that, all other application
11 criteria being equal, applicants with higher concentrations of at-risk
12 students receive funding priority. The commissioner may prioritize
13 applicants representing a consortium of school districts agreeing to
14 make a high-quality preschool program available in all member
15 districts.

16 c. The Department of Education, the Department of Children and
17 Families, and the Department of Human Services shall maintain on
18 the departments' Internet websites a page that includes:

19 (1) a list of all districts receiving preschool expansion grants for
20 the school year;

21 (2) a list of all districts eligible to apply for preschool expansion
22 grants for the school year;

23 (3) a list of all licensed child care providers and Head Start
24 programs in each district's community, as well as in neighboring
25 communities; and

26 (4) the contact information for all district-operated preschool
27 programs, licensed child care providers, and Head Start programs.

28 d. The Department of Education, the Department of Children
29 and Families, and the Department of Human Services shall annually
30 update the information required pursuant to subsection c. of this
31 section no later than July 14 of each year.

32
33 7. (New section) a. A school district that receives preschool
34 education aid pursuant to section 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-
35 54) shall:

36 (1) demonstrate due diligence to partner with all ready, willing,
37 and able licensed child care providers and Head Start programs in
38 the immediate and neighboring communities; and

39 (2) submit to the Department of Education an annual program
40 plan detailing the status of the district's preschool program
41 implementation. The plan shall include information specified by the
42 commissioner, including but not limited to:

43 (a) the district's comprehensive curriculum;

44 (b) protocol for how students' families can access community
45 services, including services offered by licensed child care providers
46 and Head Start programs;

1 (c) a description of how the district conducts outreach to
2 families to determine individual family needs, advocate on their
3 behalf, and obtain appropriate community services; and

4 (d) a description of how the district identifies and recruits
5 families of at-risk pupils and other hard-to-reach populations, and
6 subsequently ensures these children receive priority placement in
7 the preschool program.

8 b. A school district that receives preschool education aid
9 pursuant to section 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54) shall
10 participate in a system of self-assessment for continuous quality
11 improvement approved by the Department of Education to inform
12 the school district of the status of its preschool program
13 implementation. The system shall identify program areas in need of
14 improvement based on a self-assessment, and shall include a
15 validation visit by a State team at least once every three years. The
16 department may, based on the results of a district's self-assessment
17 and the validation visit, require the district to complete an
18 improvement plan. The improvement plan shall include a detailed
19 explanation and timeline of the steps the district will take to
20 improve areas identified for improvement.

21
22 8. (New section) The Department of Education, the Department
23 of Children and Families, and the Department of Human Services
24 shall, in consultation with school districts, licensed child care
25 providers, Head Start program providers, and other stakeholders
26 identified by the Commissioner of Education, submit a report to the
27 Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1)
28 no later than March 1 next following the date of enactment of
29 P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill)
30 on the status of preschool education in the State and the efficacy of
31 the mixed delivery method of preschool education. The Department
32 of Education may utilize up to \$250,000 of any appropriation for
33 preschool education aid to contract temporary staff to assist with the
34 preparation of the report issued pursuant to this section.

35
36 9. (New section) a. There is established in the Department of
37 Education a Universal Preschool Implementation Steering
38 Committee. The members of the committee shall be as follows:

- 39 (1) the Commissioner of Education, or a designee;
40 (2) the Commissioner of Children and Families, or a designee;
41 (3) the Commissioner of Human Services, or a designee;
42 (4) the Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development, or
43 a designee;
44 (5) the Commissioner of Health, or a designee;
45 (6) the Chief Executive Officer of the New Jersey Economic
46 Development Authority, or a designee;
47 (7) one member appointed by the President of the Senate, who
48 shall be an employee of the Legislature; and

- 1 (8) one member appointed by the Speaker of the General
2 Assembly, who shall be an employee of the Legislature.
- 3 b. The duties of the committee shall be as follows:
- 4 (1) recommending to the Governor and Legislature a funding
5 methodology for preschool costs to be implemented for all school
6 districts beginning in the 2028-2029 school year, which may
7 include proposing a Preschool Adequacy Budget and preschool
8 education aid formula modeled after the calculation of equalization
9 aid pursuant to section 11 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-53);
- 10 (2) evaluating the pilot program established pursuant to
11 subsection h. of section 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54) for
12 school districts that first receive preschool education aid in the
13 2025-2026, 2026-2027, and 2027-2028 school years;
- 14 (3) proposing methods to incentivize school districts to pursue
15 mixed delivery partnerships with licensed child care providers and
16 Head Start programs;
- 17 (4) proposing optional methods for school districts to establish
18 centralized enrollment systems that prioritize family choice first in
19 determining a preschool student's placement setting;
- 20 (5) analyzing whether providing an adjustment to school
21 districts' tax levy growth limitation related to preschool costs is
22 necessary or beneficial to the State's preschool expansion efforts;
23 and
- 24 (6) recommending any appropriate means by which the State can
25 seek to strengthen and expand the preschool workforce.
- 26 c. The steering committee may convene one or more local
27 subcommittees to solicit input from local practitioners to facilitate
28 completion of the requirements set forth in subsection b. of this
29 section.
- 30 d. The steering committee shall organize within 90 days of the
31 effective date of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature
32 as this bill).
- 33
- 34 10. (New section) The Department of Education, in consultation
35 with the Department of Children and Families, shall develop and
36 periodically update a Mixed Delivery Model Preschool Handbook
37 to compile all State requirements and associated guidance
38 documents, organized by topic, deemed relevant by the
39 Commissioner of Education. The topics addressed in the handbook
40 shall include, but not be limited to:
- 41 a. funding and staffing requirements;
- 42 b. school district and licensed child care provider program
43 administration;
- 44 c. eligibility, recruitment, and enrollment;
- 45 d. family engagement;
- 46 e. curriculum;
- 47 f. child assessments;
- 48 g. classroom assessments and program evaluation;

1 h. optional strategies for school districts to establish centralized
2 enrollment systems that prioritize family choice first in determining
3 a preschool student's placement setting; and

4 i. strategies for supporting contracted licensed child care
5 providers in maintaining access to infant and toddler care.
6

7 11. (New section) In order to strengthen and expand the
8 preschool workforce, the Secretary of Higher Education shall
9 develop guidance encouraging two- and four-year public
10 institutions of higher education to enter into joint dual degree
11 admission agreements that require all credits earned toward Early
12 Childhood Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degrees to be
13 fully transferable and applicable to course requirements for
14 educator preparation programs at four-year institutions of higher
15 education.
16

17 12. (New section) The Department of Children and Families, in
18 consultation with the Department of Human Services and
19 Department of Education, shall develop guidance for licensed child
20 care providers to establish graduated salary scales for private
21 teachers working toward preschool certification. The guidance
22 shall encourage the development of salary scales that provide salary
23 increases for increased academic preparation, including the
24 completion of a Child Development Associate credential, the
25 attainment of credits toward degree completion, the award of a
26 bachelor's degree in early childhood education, and the receipt of
27 an early childhood teacher certification.
28

29 13. N.J.S.18A:44-2 is amended to read as follows:

30 18A:44-2. a. The board of education of [any] a district [may]
31 serving elementary grades shall establish a kindergarten school or
32 kindergarten department, which in order to receive State aid shall
33 be a one-year program in advance of or in preparation for entrance
34 to first grade, in any school under its control, and [may admit to
35 such kindergarten school or department any child over the age of
36 four and under the age of five and] shall admit to [such] the
37 kindergarten school or department any child over the age of five
38 and under the age of six years as of October 1 of that school year
39 who is a resident of the district , but a board of education may, in its
40 discretion, admit any student who turns five after this date if they
41 meet entrance requirements as may be established by the rules and
42 regulations of the board through a board approved policy.

43 b. A kindergarten school or kindergarten department established
44 by a board of education shall provide a full-day kindergarten
45 program no later than the beginning of the 2029-2030 school year;
46 provided, however, that a district not providing a full-day
47 kindergarten program prior to the effective date of P.L. ,

48 c. (pending before the Legislature as this bill) may satisfy the

1 requirements of this subsection by entering a sending-receiving
 2 relationship with a kindergarten school or kindergarten department
 3 established by the board of education of an adjacent school district.
 4 The tuition of students attending a kindergarten school or
 5 kindergarten department in another district in accordance with a
 6 sending-receive agreement shall be determined in accordance with
 7 N.J.S.18A:38-19. Attendance at a kindergarten school or
 8 kindergarten department shall be free in accordance with the
 9 requirements of N.J.S.18A:38-1.
 10 (cf: P.L.1996, c.138, s.72)

11
 12 14. Section 8 of P.L.2000, c.72 (C.18A:7G-8) is amended to read
 13 as follows:

14 8. a. The number of unhoused students shall be calculated as the
 15 number of FTE students who are projected to be enrolled in
 16 **【preschool for children with disabilities, preschool,】** kindergarten,
 17 grades 1 through 12, and special education services pupil
 18 educational programs provided in a district within five years, which
 19 are in excess of the functional capacity of the district's current
 20 school facilities or the functional capacity of the school facilities
 21 which will be available within five years other than the school
 22 facilities for which the preliminary eligible costs are determined,
 23 based upon the district's long-range facilities plan. The
 24 determination of unhoused capacity shall separately consider
 25 projected enrollments and functional capacities at the **【early**
 26 **childhood and】** elementary (**【preschool】** kindergarten through
 27 grade 5), middle (grades 6 through 8), and high school (grades 9
 28 through 12) levels. For the purpose of calculating the district's
 29 unhoused students, special education services students shall be
 30 considered part of the grade level to which the students'
 31 chronological age corresponds. In the event that the commissioner
 32 approves a school facilities project which involves the construction
 33 of a new school facility to replace an existing school facility, which
 34 shall accommodate both the unhoused students and the students in
 35 the existing school facility, the calculation of the number of
 36 unhoused students shall include the number of students currently
 37 attending the existing facility which is to be replaced.

38 b. Approved area for unhoused students (AU) shall be
 39 determined according to the following formula:

40
$$AU = \mathbf{【(UEC \times SEC) +】} (UE \times SE) + (UM \times SM) + (UH \times SH)$$

 41 where

42 **【UEC,】** UE, UM, UH are the numbers of unhoused students in
 43 the **【early childhood,】** elementary, middle, and high school
 44 enrollment categories, respectively; and

45 **【SEC,】** SE, SM, SH are the area allowances per FTE student in
 46 **【preschool and】** kindergarten **【, grades 1】** through grade 5, grades
 47 6 through 8, and grades 9 through 12, respectively. Area allowances

1 shall be determined based on the grade level of a student regardless
2 of the grade configurations used in the school buildings of the
3 district.

4 The minimum area allowance per FTE student shall be as
5 follows:

6 【Preschool】 <u>Kindergarten</u> through grade 5	125 sq. ft.
7 Grades 6 through 8	134 sq. ft.
8 Grades 9 through 12	151 sq. ft.

9 The commissioner, in consultation with the State Treasurer and
10 the Commissioner of Community Affairs, shall adopt regulations
11 that establish a process for the consideration of special
12 circumstances, in addition to those provided in section 5 of
13 P.L.2010, c.72 (C.18A:7G-5), in which the area allowances per FTE
14 student established pursuant to this subsection may be adjusted.
15 Any decision made by the commissioner pursuant to those
16 regulations shall be made in consultation with the State Treasurer
17 and the Commissioner of Community Affairs.
18 (cf: P.L.2017, c.131, s.18)
19

20 15. (New section) The Commissioner of Education shall adopt,
21 pursuant to the “Administrative Procedure Act,” P.L.1968, c.410
22 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), rules and regulations necessary to effectuate
23 the provisions of this act.
24

25 16. This act shall take effect immediately

[First Reprint]

SENATE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR
SENATE, No. 3910

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
221st LEGISLATURE

ADOPTED MAY 12, 2025

Sponsored by:

Senator M. TERESA RUIZ

District 29 (Essex and Hudson)

Senator SHIRLEY K. TURNER

District 15 (Hunterdon and Mercer)

Assemblywoman ANDREA KATZ

District 8 (Atlantic and Burlington)

Assemblyman STERLEY S. STANLEY

District 18 (Middlesex)

Co-Sponsored by:

**Senators McKnight, Burgess, Assemblywomen Haider, Donlon, Ramirez,
Quijano, Peterpaul and Morales**

SYNOPSIS

Makes various changes to provision of preschool aid and facilities requirements; establishes Universal Preschool Implementation Steering Committee; requires full-day kindergarten in all school districts.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As reported by the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee on June 26, 2025, with amendments.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 6/30/2025)

1 **AN ACT** concerning early childhood education, amending various
2 parts of the statutory law, and supplementing P.L.2007, c.260
3 ¹and chapters 26 and 44 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes¹.
4

5 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
6 *of New Jersey:*
7

8 1. (New section) Sections 1 and 2 ¹**[,]** ¹and¹ 6 through ¹**[12, and**
9 **15]** ¹11¹ of this act shall be known and may be cited as the “New
10 Jersey Universal Preschool and Kindergarten Act.”
11

12 2. (New section) The Legislature finds and declares that:

13 a. Research is clear that high-quality preschool can change the
14 educational trajectories of young children, particularly
15 economically disadvantaged children and multilingual learners.
16 Improvements in literacy, numeracy, social-emotional and self-
17 regulatory development, and lifetime earnings have been
18 demonstrated among individuals who attend high-quality preschool
19 compared to their peers.

20 b. New Jersey leads the nation in expanding access to high-
21 quality preschool opportunities. The State has achieved a unique
22 and world-class combination of significant financial investment and
23 rigorous quality standards. New Jersey State-funded preschools are
24 required to serve three- and four-year olds in full-day programs
25 featuring small class sizes led by quality instructors with ample
26 curriculum support, professional development, and accommodations
27 for students with special needs. New Jersey’s State spending on
28 preschool is among the highest in the country, with clear,
29 significant impacts on our public school system: tens of thousands
30 of three- and four-year olds in hundreds of communities around the
31 State attend transformative high-quality early education programs.

32 c. District-operated preschool programs, licensed childcare
33 centers, and Head Start programs form an interrelated and
34 interdependent early childhood ecosystem. Each component is made
35 stronger by the other, and the system is greater and more impactful
36 than the sum of its parts. No component can reach its full potential
37 without the facilities, staff, resources, and expertise of the others.
38 Together, the system represents a continuum of education and care
39 services from birth through age five necessary not only for children
40 to realize their full life potential, but for families to participate fully
41 in economic and civic society. To lift up this system is a moral and
42 economic imperative.

43 d. To build on the State’s preschool expansion progress to date
44 and to realize the full benefits of high-quality preschool, it is fitting

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets **[thus]** in the above bill is
not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

Matter enclosed in superscript numerals has been adopted as follows:

¹ Senate SBA committee amendments adopted June 26, 2025.

1 and proper for the State to enshrine certain policies and values in
2 State law, including:

3 (1) providing sustainable, annual financial support for
4 expanding access to high-quality preschool;

5 (2) codifying preschool education aid provisions previously
6 implemented through language in various annual appropriations
7 acts and harmonizing New Jersey law accordingly;

8 (3) prioritizing expansion for economically disadvantaged
9 families and communities;

10 (4) requiring State-funded preschool programs to make every
11 effort to partner with local ready, willing, and able licensed
12 childcare providers and Head Start programs; and

13 (5) conducting ongoing evaluations of the State's approach to
14 early childhood and preschool education to ensure that policy
15 continues to reflect stakeholder expertise and evolving research.

16 e. In addition to high-quality preschool education, full-day
17 kindergarten is necessary not only to unlock a child's full learning
18 potential, but to facilitate a smooth transition from high-quality
19 preschool into elementary programs.
20

21 3. Section 3 of P.L.2007, c.62 (C.18A:7F-38) is amended to read
22 as follows:

23 3. a. Notwithstanding the provisions of any other law to the
24 contrary, a school district shall not adopt a budget pursuant to sections
25 5 and 6 of P.L.1996, c.138 (C.18A:7F-5 and 18A:7F-6) with an
26 increase in its adjusted tax levy that exceeds, except as provided in
27 subsection e. of section 4 of P.L.2007, c.62 (C.18A:7F-39), the tax
28 levy growth limitation calculated as follows: the sum of the prebudget
29 year adjusted tax levy and the adjustment for increases in enrollment
30 multiplied by 2.0 percent, and adjustments for an increase in health
31 care costs, increases in amounts for certain normal and accrued
32 liability pension contributions set forth in sections 1 and 2 of P.L.2009,
33 c.19 amending section 24 of P.L.1954, c.84 (C.43:15A-24) and section
34 15 of P.L.1944, c.255 (C.43:16A-15) for the year set forth in those
35 sections, **[and,]** in the case of an SDA district as defined pursuant to
36 section 3 of P.L.2000, c.72 (C.18A:7G-3), during the 2018-2019
37 through the 2024-2025 school years, increases to raise a general fund
38 tax levy to an amount that does not exceed its local share , and, in the
39 case of a school district first receiving preschool education aid in the
40 2025-2026, 2026-2027, or 2027-2028 school years and participating in
41 the pilot program established by the commissioner pursuant to
42 subsection h. of 'section' 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54),
43 increases to raise a general fund tax levy for the local share of
44 preschool education costs.

45 b. (1) The allowable adjustment for increases in enrollment
46 authorized pursuant to subsection a. of this section shall equal the per
47 pupil prebudget year adjusted tax levy multiplied by EP, where EP
48 equals the sum of:

1 (a) 0.50 for each unit of weighted resident enrollment that
2 constitutes an increase from the prebudget year over 1%, but not more
3 than 2.5%;

4 (b) 0.75 for each unit of weighted resident enrollment that
5 constitutes an increase from the prebudget year over 2.5%, but not
6 more than 4%; and

7 (c) 1.00 for each unit of weighted resident enrollment that
8 constitutes an increase from the prebudget year over 4%.

9 (2) A school district may request approval from the commissioner
10 to calculate EP equal to 1.00 for any increase in weighted resident
11 enrollment if it can demonstrate that the calculation pursuant to
12 paragraph (1) of this subsection would result in an average class size
13 that exceeds 10% above the facilities efficiency standards established
14 pursuant to P.L.2000, c.72 (C.18A:7G-1 et al.).

15 c. (Deleted by amendment, P.L.2010, c.44)

16 d. (1) The allowable adjustment for increases in health care costs
17 authorized pursuant to subsection a. of this section shall equal that
18 portion of the actual increase in total health care costs for the budget
19 year, less any withdrawals from the current expense emergency
20 reserve account for increases in total health care costs, that exceeds 2.0
21 percent of the total health care costs in the prebudget year, but that is
22 not in excess of the product of the total health care costs in the
23 prebudget year multiplied by the average percentage increase of the
24 State Health Benefits Program, P.L.1961, c.49 (C.52:14-17.25 et seq.),
25 as annually determined by the Division of Pensions and Benefits in the
26 Department of the Treasury.

27 (2) The allowable adjustment for increases in the amount of
28 normal and accrued liability pension contributions authorized pursuant
29 to subsection a. of this section shall equal that portion of the actual
30 increase in total normal and accrued liability pension contributions for
31 the budget year that exceeds 2.0 percent of the total normal and
32 accrued liability pension contributions in the prebudget year.

33 (3) In the case of an SDA district, as defined pursuant to section 3
34 of P.L.2000, c.72 (C.18A:7G-3), in which the prebudget year adjusted
35 tax levy is less than the school district's prebudget year local share as
36 calculated pursuant to section 10 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-52),
37 the allowable adjustment for increases to raise a tax levy that does not
38 exceed the school district's local share shall equal the difference
39 between the prebudget year adjusted tax levy and the prebudget year
40 local share.

41 (4) In the case of a school district first receiving preschool
42 education aid in the 2025-2026, 2026-2027, or 2027-2028 school years
43 and participating in the pilot program established by the commissioner
44 pursuant to subsection h. of 'section' 12 of P.L.2007, c.260
45 (C.18A:7F-54), the allowable adjustment for increases to raise a
46 general fund tax levy for the local share of preschool education costs
47 shall be equal to the actual increase required to provide preschool

1 education under the pilot program less State aid provided pursuant to
2 subsection h. of 'section' 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54).

3 A school district first receiving preschool education aid in the
4 2025-2026 school year and participating in the pilot program
5 established by the commissioner pursuant to subsection h. of 'section'
6 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54) may, prior to the delivery of tax
7 bills pursuant to R.S.54:4-64, recertify to the county board of taxation
8 the sum to be raised in the district during the ensuing school year if the
9 change in the amount to be raised is equal to the district's local share
10 of preschool education costs for that school year.

11 e. (Deleted by amendment, P.L.2010, c.44)

12 f. The adjusted tax levy shall be increased or decreased
13 accordingly whenever the responsibility and associated cost of a
14 school district activity is transferred to another school district or
15 governmental entity.

16 (cf: P.L.2018, c.67, s.6)

17
18 4. Section 3 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-45) is amended to
19 read as follows:

20 3. As used in **【this act】** P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-43 et al.)
21 and P.L.1996, c.138 (C.18A:7F-1 et al.), unless the context clearly
22 requires a different meaning:

23 "At-risk pupils" means those resident pupils from households
24 with a household income at or below the most recent federal
25 poverty guidelines available on October 15 of the prebudget year
26 multiplied by 1.85;

27 "Base per pupil amount" means the cost per elementary pupil of
28 delivering the core curriculum content standards and extracurricular
29 and cocurricular activities necessary for a thorough and efficient
30 education;

31 "Bilingual education pupil" means a resident pupil enrolled in a
32 program of bilingual education or in an English as a second
33 language program approved by the State Board of Education;

34 "Budgeted local share" means the district's local tax levy
35 contained in the budget certified for taxation purposes;

36 "Capital outlay" means capital outlay as defined in GAAP;

37 "Combination pupil" means a resident pupil who is both an at-
38 risk pupil and a bilingual education pupil;

39 "Commissioner" means the Commissioner of Education;

40 "Concentration of at-risk pupils" shall be based on prebudget
41 year pupil data and means, for a school district or a county
42 vocational school district, the number of at-risk pupils among those
43 counted in resident enrollment, divided by resident enrollment;

44 "County special services school district" means any entity
45 established pursuant to article 8 of chapter 46 of Title 18A of the
46 New Jersey Statutes;

1 "County vocational school district" means any entity established
2 pursuant to article 3 of chapter 54 of Title 18A of the New Jersey
3 Statutes;

4 "CPI" means the increase, expressed as a decimal, in the average
5 annualized consumer price index for the New York City and
6 Philadelphia areas in the fiscal year preceding the prebudget year
7 relative to the previous fiscal year as reported by the United States
8 Department of Labor;

9 "Debt service" means payments of principal and interest upon
10 school bonds and other obligations issued to finance the purchase or
11 construction of school facilities, additions to school facilities, or the
12 reconstruction, remodeling, alteration, modernization, renovation or
13 repair of school facilities, including furnishings, equipment,
14 architect fees, and the costs of issuance of such obligations and
15 shall include payments of principal and interest upon bonds
16 heretofore issued to fund or refund such obligations, and upon
17 municipal bonds and other obligations which the commissioner
18 approves as having been issued for such purposes;

19 "District income" means the aggregate income of the residents of
20 the taxing district or taxing districts, based upon data provided by
21 the Division of Taxation in the New Jersey Department of the
22 Treasury and contained on the New Jersey State Income Tax forms
23 for the calendar year ending two years prior to the prebudget year.
24 The commissioner may supplement data contained on the State
25 Income Tax forms with data available from other State or federal
26 agencies in order to better correlate the data to that collected on the
27 federal census. With respect to regional districts and their
28 constituent districts, however, the district income as described
29 above shall be allocated among the regional and constituent districts
30 in proportion to the number of pupils resident in each of them;

31 "Equalized valuation" means the equalized valuation of the
32 taxing district or taxing districts, as certified by the Director of the
33 Division of Taxation on October 1, or subsequently revised by the
34 tax court by January 15, of the prebudget year. With respect to
35 regional districts and their constituent districts, however, the
36 equalized valuations as described above shall be allocated among
37 the regional and constituent districts in proportion to the number of
38 pupils resident in each of them. In the event that the equalized table
39 certified by the director shall be revised by the tax court after
40 January 15 of the prebudget year, the revised valuations shall be
41 used in the recomputation of aid for an individual school district
42 filing an appeal, but shall have no effect upon the calculation of the
43 property value rate, Statewide average equalized school tax rate, or
44 Statewide equalized total tax rate;

45 "Full-day preschool" means a preschool day consisting of a
46 minimum six-hour comprehensive educational program in
47 accordance with the district's kindergarten through grade 12 school
48 calendar;

1 "GAAP" means the generally accepted accounting principles
2 established by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board as
3 prescribed by the State board pursuant to N.J.S.18A:4-14;

4 "General special education services pupil" means a pupil
5 receiving specific services pursuant to chapter 46 of Title 18A of
6 the New Jersey Statutes;

7 "Geographic cost adjustment" means an adjustment that reflects
8 county differences in the cost of providing educational services that
9 are outside the control of the district;

10 "Household income" means income as defined in 7 CFR ss.245.2
11 and 245.6 or any subsequent superseding federal law or regulation;

12 "Net budget" means the sum of the district's general fund tax
13 levy, State aid received pursuant to the provisions of this act other
14 than preschool education aid, miscellaneous revenue estimated
15 pursuant to GAAP, and designated general fund balance;

16 **["Prebudget year" means the school fiscal year preceding the**
17 **year in which the school budget is implemented;]**

18 "Nonpreschool ECPA" means the amount of early childhood
19 program aid, excluding prior year carry-forward amounts, included
20 in a district's 2007-2008 school year budget certified for taxes that
21 was allocated to grades K through 3;

22 "Prebudget year" means the school fiscal year preceding the year
23 in which the school budget is implemented;

24 "Preschool expansion grant" means any grant funded by a
25 portion of preschool education aid allocated by the Commissioner
26 of Education or any other State funds appropriated for the purpose
27 of expanding free access to high-quality preschool for resident
28 three- and four-year old children in districts that do not, at the time
29 of application for a grant, provide State-funded, high-quality, free
30 preschool programs;

31 "Report" means the Educational Adequacy Report issued by the
32 commissioner pursuant to section 4 of this act;

33 "Resident enrollment" means the number of pupils other than
34 preschool pupils, post-graduate pupils, and post-secondary
35 vocational pupils who, on the last school day prior to October 16 of
36 the current school year, are residents of the district and are enrolled
37 in: (1) the public schools of the district, excluding evening schools,
38 (2) another school district, other than a county vocational school
39 district in the same county on a full-time basis, or a State college
40 demonstration school or private school to which the district of
41 residence pays tuition, or (3) a State facility in which they are
42 placed by the district; or are residents of the district and are: (1)
43 receiving home instruction, or (2) in a shared-time vocational
44 program and are regularly attending a school in the district and a
45 county vocational school district. In addition, resident enrollment
46 shall include the number of pupils who, on the last school day prior
47 to October 16 of the prebudget year, are residents of the district and
48 in a State facility in which they were placed by the State. Pupils in

1 a shared-time vocational program shall be counted on an equated
2 full-time basis in accordance with procedures to be established by
3 the commissioner. Resident enrollment shall include regardless of
4 nonresidence, the enrolled children of teaching staff members of the
5 school district or county vocational school district who are
6 permitted, by contract or local district policy, to enroll their
7 children in the educational program of the school district or county
8 vocational school district without payment of tuition. Disabled
9 children between three and five years of age and receiving programs
10 and services pursuant to N.J.S.18A:46-6 shall be included in the
11 resident enrollment of the district;

12 "School district" means any local or regional school district
13 established pursuant to chapter 8 or chapter 13 of Title 18A of the
14 New Jersey Statutes;

15 "State facility" means a State developmental center, a State
16 Division of Youth and Family Services' residential center, a State
17 residential mental health center, a Department of Children and
18 Families Regional Day School, a State training school/secure care
19 facility, a State juvenile community program, a juvenile detention
20 center or a boot camp under the supervisory authority of the
21 Youth Justice Commission pursuant to P.L.1995, c.284 (C.52:17B-
22 169 et seq.), or an institution operated by or under contract with the
23 Department of Corrections, Children and Families or Human
24 Services, or the Youth Justice Commission;

25 "Statewide equalized school tax rate" means the amount
26 calculated by dividing the general fund tax levy for all school
27 districts, which excludes county vocational school districts and
28 county special services school districts as defined pursuant to this
29 section, in the State for the prebudget year by the equalized
30 valuations certified in the year prior to the prebudget year of all
31 taxing districts in the State except taxing districts for which there
32 are not school tax levies;

33 "Tax levy growth limitation" means the permitted annual
34 increase in the adjusted tax levy for a school district as calculated
35 pursuant to sections 3 and 4 of P.L.2007, c.62 (C.18A:7F-38 and
36 18A:7F-39).

37 (cf: P.L.2025, c.35, s.37)

38

39 5. Section 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54) is amended to
40 read as follows:

41 12. a. **【District factor group A and B school districts, and district**
42 **factor group CD school districts with a concentration of at-risk**
43 **pupils equal to or greater than 40%, shall provide free access to**
44 **full-day preschool for all three- and four-year old pupils. All other**
45 **school districts shall provide free access to full-day preschool for**
46 **at-risk pupils. Preschool education aid shall reflect the cost of the**
47 **pupil's placement in either a district program, a licensed child care**
48 **provider program, or a Head Start Program.】** (Deleted by

1 amendment, P.L. , c.) (pending before the Legislature as this
2 bill)

3 (1) **【Preschool】** In the case of a school district that received
4 preschool education aid in the 2024-2025 school year, preschool
5 education aid shall be calculated **【for district factor group A and B**
6 **school districts, and for district factor group CD school districts**
7 **with a concentration of at-risk pupils equal to or greater than 40%,】**
8 as follows:

9
$$\text{Aid} = (\text{IDE} \times \text{IDA}) + (\text{PRE} \times \text{PRA}) + (\text{HSE} \times \text{HSA})$$

10 where

11 IDE is the **【number】** projected FTE enrollment for the upcoming
12 school year of district pupils, other than preschool disabled pupils,
13 in an in-district preschool program;

14 IDA is the per pupil aid amount for an in-district preschool
15 program;

16 PRE is the **【number】** projected FTE enrollment for the upcoming
17 school year of district pupils, other than preschool disabled pupils,
18 in a preschool program operated by a licensed child care provider;

19 PRA is the per pupil aid amount for a preschool program
20 operated by a licensed child care provider;

21 HSE is the **【number】** projected FTE enrollment for the
22 upcoming school year of district pupils, other than preschool
23 disabled pupils, in a Head Start Program; and

24 HSA is the per pupil aid amount for a Head Start Program.

25 **【A CD school district with a concentration of at-risk pupils equal to**
26 **or greater than 40% shall be eligible to receive preschool education**
27 **aid pursuant to the provisions of this paragraph for a minimum of**
28 **three school years from the time of initial determination of**
29 **eligibility even if the district's concentration of at-risk pupils falls**
30 **below a 40% concentration of at-risk pupils. In the event that the**
31 **district falls below a 40% concentration of at-risk pupils for two**
32 **consecutive school years, in the third school year the district shall**
33 **receive preschool education aid for each at-risk pupil and for any**
34 **four-year old pupil for whom the district received preschool**
35 **education aid in the prior school year, and that pupil shall receive**
36 **free preschool education.】**

37 (2) **【Preschool education aid shall be calculated for all other**
38 **districts as follows:**

39
$$\text{Aid} = (\text{ARID} \times \text{IDA}) + (\text{ARP} \times \text{PRA}) + (\text{ARHS} \times \text{HSA})$$

40 where

41 ARID is the number of at-risk district pupils, other than
42 preschool disabled pupils, in an in-district preschool program;

43 IDA is the per pupil aid amount for an in-district preschool
44 program;

45 ARP is the number of at-risk district pupils, other than preschool
46 disabled pupils, in a preschool program operated by a licensed child
47 care provider;

1 PRA is the per pupil aid amount for a preschool program
2 operated by a licensed child care provider;

3 ARHS is the number of at-risk district pupils, other than
4 preschool disabled pupils, in a Head Start Program; and

5 HSA is the per pupil aid amount for a Head Start Program.】
6 (Deleted by amendment, P.L. , c.) (pending before the
7 Legislature as this bill)

8 b. 【In accordance with regulations adopted by the
9 commissioner, all districts shall submit a five-year plan that
10 provides for the full implementation of full-day preschool for all
11 eligible three- and four-year olds by the 2013-2014 school year. For
12 the purposes of this section, "full implementation" means serving
13 90% of eligible pupils in accordance with the preschool quality
14 standards adopted by the commissioner or such greater percentage
15 as determined by the commissioner. A school district shall annually
16 update the five-year plan based on actual implementation
17 experience and shall revise its pupil projections in accordance with
18 that experience.】 (Deleted by amendment, P.L. , c.) (pending
19 before the Legislature as this bill)

20 c. (1) 【In the case of a school district that did not receive any
21 form of preschool aid in the 2007-2008 school year, the 2008-2009
22 school year shall be a preschool planning year. Beginning in the
23 2009-2010 school year, the school district shall receive preschool
24 education aid calculated in accordance with the provisions of
25 subsection a. of this section based upon projected preschool
26 enrollment.

27 In the 2009-2010 school year the school district may also receive
28 start-up funds in accordance with regulations adopted by the
29 commissioner.】 (Deleted by amendment, P.L. , c.) (pending
30 before the Legislature as this bill)

31 (2) In the case of a school district that received Early Launch to
32 Learning Initiative aid in the 2007-2008 school year, 【for the 2008-
33 2009 school year the district shall receive preschool education aid
34 in an amount equal to the district's allocation of Early Launch to
35 Learning Initiative aid in the 2007-2008 school year. Beginning in
36 the 2009-2010 school year,】 the school district shall receive
37 preschool education aid calculated in accordance with the
38 provisions of paragraph (1) of subsection a. of this section 【based
39 upon projected preschool enrollment.

40 In the 2009-2010 school year the school district may also receive
41 start-up funds in accordance with regulations adopted by the
42 commissioner】 pending a determination by the commissioner that
43 the district is prepared to meet all program requirements for high-
44 quality preschool pursuant to regulations adopted by the
45 commissioner.

46 (3) In the case of a school district that received early childhood
47 program aid in the 2007-2008 school year but did not receive

1 preschool expansion aid or education opportunity aid in that year,
 2 **【**for the 2008-2009 school year the district shall receive preschool
 3 education aid equal to the greater of the district's 2007-2008 amount
 4 of early childhood program aid for preschool or the district's 2007-
 5 2008 per pupil allocation of early childhood program aid as
 6 included in the district's original 2007-2008 budget certified for
 7 taxes, inflated by the CPI, and multiplied by the district's projected
 8 preschool enrollment; except that if the district is able to
 9 demonstrate in the five-year plan submitted to the commissioner
 10 that it has the capacity to offer a full-day three- or four-year-old
 11 program, or a full-day three- and four-year-old program, in the
 12 2008-2009 school year, the commissioner may approve the funding
 13 of the full-day program calculated in accordance with the provisions
 14 of subsection a. of this section based upon projected preschool
 15 enrollment. The district shall be informed of the commissioner's
 16 determination upon approval of the five-year plan. Beginning in the
 17 2009-2010 school year,**】** the school district shall receive preschool
 18 education aid calculated in accordance with the provisions of
 19 paragraph (1) of subsection a. of this section **【**based upon projected
 20 preschool enrollment.

21 In the 2009-2010 school year the school district may also receive
 22 start-up funds in accordance with regulations adopted by the
 23 commissioner**】** pending a determination by the commissioner that
 24 the district is prepared to meet all program requirements for high-
 25 quality preschool pursuant to regulations adopted by the
 26 commissioner.

27 (4) **【**In the case of a school district that received preschool
 28 expansion aid or education opportunity aid in the 2007-2008 school
 29 year, for the 2008-2009 school year the district shall receive
 30 preschool education aid in an amount equal to the preschool budget
 31 approved by the commissioner for the 2008-2009 school year.
 32 Preschool education aid for the 2008-2009 school year shall be
 33 adjusted following receipt of the Application for State School Aid
 34 in October 2008. Beginning in the 2009-2010 school year, the
 35 school district shall receive preschool education aid calculated in
 36 accordance with the provisions of subsection a. of this section based
 37 upon projected preschool enrollment; except that for any school
 38 year the district shall not receive preschool aid in an amount less
 39 than either the total amount of preschool aid the district received in
 40 the 2008-2009 school year after the State aid adjustment or the
 41 district's 2008-2009 school year preschool per pupil aid amount
 42 multiplied by the projected number of preschool pupils after the
 43 State aid adjustment, whichever is greater.

44 In the 2009-2010 school year the school district may also receive
 45 start-up funds in accordance with regulations adopted by the
 46 commissioner.**】** (Deleted by amendment, P.L. , c.) (pending
 47 before the Legislature as this bill)

1 d. For the 2008-2009 school year, the preschool per pupil aid
2 amounts shall be \$11,506 for pupils enrolled in an in-district
3 program, \$12,934 for pupils enrolled in a licensed child care
4 provider program, and \$7,146 for pupils enrolled in a Head Start
5 Program. The preschool per pupil aid amounts shall be adjusted by
6 the CPI in the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school years as required
7 pursuant to subsection b. of section 4 of this act. For subsequent
8 school years, the preschool per pupil aid amounts shall be
9 established in the Educational Adequacy Report, with the amounts
10 adjusted by the CPI for each of the two school years following the
11 first school year to which the report is applicable.

12 e. A district shall appropriate preschool education aid in a
13 special revenue fund for expenditure. In the event that any
14 preschool education aid is not expended during the budget year, the
15 aid may be carried forward in accordance with regulations adopted
16 by the commissioner.

17 f. In the event that a district has fully implemented a full-day
18 preschool program for three- and four-year old pupils **【in**
19 **accordance with its five-year plan】** and meets the preschool quality
20 standards or has provided preschool education to the number of
21 eligible students to be served during a school year in accordance
22 with **【that plan and its annual updates and】** the preschool quality
23 standards, the district may appropriate preschool education aid **【to**
24 **support kindergarten through grade 12 or to provide preschool**
25 **education for three- and four-year old pupils for whom the district**
26 **is not required to provide preschool education upon the approval of**
27 **the commissioner. The district shall request approval in its annual**
28 **plan update and any approval granted by the commissioner shall be**
29 **made during the annual school budget process】** for additional
30 purposes that may be designated by the commissioner, which
31 purposes shall include, but not be limited to, providing summer
32 programming for preschool students, professional development for
33 preschool staff, preschool facilities improvements, and
34 transportation services for preschool pupils.

35 g. A school district shall maintain the preschool quality
36 standards as adopted by the commissioner as a condition of receipt
37 of preschool education aid.

38 h. In the case of a school district that first receives preschool
39 education aid in the 2025-2026, 2026-2027, or 2027-2028 school
40 years, the aid shall be provided, within the limit of available
41 appropriations, pursuant to a three-year pilot program established
42 by the commissioner that includes a cost sharing methodology
43 between the State and the school district such that the amount of
44 preschool education aid allocated to the district shall be calculated
45 by multiplying the district aid percentage by the amount calculated
46 pursuant to the formula in paragraph (1) of subsection a. of this
47 section, where the district aid percentage shall be equal to the

1 greater of the district aid percentage as defined pursuant to section 3
2 of P.L.2000, c.72 (C.18A:7G-3) or 40 percent of eligible costs.

3 i. A school district receiving preschool education aid shall
4 obtain approval by the Commissioner of Education, in a manner
5 prescribed by the commissioner, prior to implementing any
6 significant redistribution, as defined by the commissioner, of State-
7 funded preschool seats among district-operated programs, licensed
8 child care providers, and Head Start programs.

9 (cf: P.L.2007, c.260, s.12)

10
11 6. (New section) a. The Department of Education shall, within the
12 limit of funds appropriated, annually provide at least one opportunity
13 to award preschool expansion grants in accordance with the provisions
14 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill).
15 A school district shall be eligible to apply for and receive a preschool
16 expansion grant if the district provides full-day kindergarten at the
17 time of application and meets any other criteria the Commissioner of
18 Education deems appropriate. An eligible school district shall submit
19 an application to the commissioner, in a manner and form determined
20 by the commissioner, which application shall include, but not be
21 limited to, the following:

22 (1) a general overview of the district's proposed preschool
23 program operational plan;

24 (2) enrollment projections for preschool students, other than
25 preschool students with disabilities, for the next five years;

26 (3) a description of the district's proposed preschool curriculum;

27 (4) a description of intended strategies to ensure the inclusion of
28 preschool children with disabilities in general education settings to the
29 maximum extent possible;

30 (5) a description of intended strategies to annually identify and
31 recruit families of at-risk pupils and other hard-to-reach populations,
32 and subsequently ensure these children receive priority placement in
33 the preschool program;

34 (6) a demonstration of due diligence to partner with all ready,
35 willing, and able licensed child care providers and Head Start
36 programs in the district's immediate and neighboring communities ¹,
37 which shall be made in a manner determined by the commissioner and
38 shall include, but not be limited to, documenting all efforts the
39 applicant made to engage with all licensed child care providers and
40 Head Start programs in the applicant's immediate and neighboring
41 communities¹;

42 (7) an analysis of community need and the potential impact of a
43 mixed delivery model of preschool education in a format determined
44 by the commissioner or, if the applicant does not propose a mixed
45 delivery model, justification for the decision not to do so, which
46 justification shall include evidence that the district has adequate
47 facility and staffing resources to implement high-quality preschool
48 education without a mixed delivery model ¹or that extenuating

1 circumstances in the eligible school district's community limit
2 accessibility to, or feasibility of partnership with, licensed childcare
3 centers and Head Start programs¹; and

4 (8) a description of the strategies the district has in place for
5 serving eligible preschool students, with a five-year plan to serve 90
6 percent of the district's universe of three- and four-year olds.

7 b. In determining preschool expansion grant amounts and
8 recipients, the commissioner shall give preference to districts in
9 accordance with the concentration of at-risk pupils, as defined in
10 section 3 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-45). Preference given
11 pursuant to this subsection shall ensure that, all other application
12 criteria being equal, applicants with higher concentrations of at-risk
13 students receive funding priority. The commissioner may prioritize
14 applicants representing a consortium of school districts agreeing to
15 make a high-quality preschool program available in all member
16 districts.

17 c. The Department of Education, the Department of Children and
18 Families, and the Department of Human Services shall maintain on the
19 departments' Internet websites a page that includes:

20 (1) a list of all districts ¹**【receiving preschool expansion grants】**
21 offering State-funded preschool¹ for the school year;

22 (2) a list of all districts eligible to apply for preschool expansion
23 grants for the school year;

24 (3) a list of all licensed child care providers and Head Start
25 programs in each district's community, as well as in neighboring
26 communities; and

27 (4) the contact information for all district-operated preschool
28 programs, licensed child care providers, and Head Start programs.

29 d. The Department of Education, the Department of Children and
30 Families, and the Department of Human Services shall annually update
31 the information required pursuant to subsection c. of this section no
32 later than July 14 of each year. ¹The Department of Education, the
33 Department of Children and Families, and the Department of Human
34 Services shall update the information required pursuant to subsection
35 c. of this section in a timely manner after any preschool expansion
36 grants are awarded.¹

37
38 7. (New section) a. A school district that receives preschool
39 education aid pursuant to section 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-
40 54) shall:

41 (1) demonstrate due diligence to partner with all ready, willing,
42 and able licensed child care providers and Head Start programs in
43 the immediate and neighboring communities; and

44 (2) submit to the Department of Education an annual program
45 plan detailing the status of the district's preschool program
46 implementation. The plan shall include information specified by the
47 commissioner, including but not limited to:

- 1 (a) the district's comprehensive curriculum;
- 2 (b) protocol for how students' families can access community
- 3 services, including services offered by licensed child care providers
- 4 and Head Start programs;
- 5 (c) a description of how the district conducts outreach to
- 6 families to determine individual family needs, advocate on their
- 7 behalf, and obtain appropriate community services; and
- 8 (d) a description of how the district identifies and recruits
- 9 families of at-risk pupils and other hard-to-reach populations, and
- 10 subsequently ensures these children receive priority placement in
- 11 the preschool program.
- 12 b. A school district that receives preschool education aid
- 13 pursuant to section 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54) shall
- 14 participate in a system of self-assessment for continuous quality
- 15 improvement approved by the Department of Education to inform
- 16 the school district of the status of its preschool program
- 17 implementation. The system shall identify program areas in need of
- 18 improvement based on a self-assessment, and shall include a
- 19 validation visit by a State team at least once every three years. The
- 20 department may, based on the results of a district's self-assessment
- 21 and the validation visit, require the district to complete an
- 22 improvement plan. The improvement plan shall include a detailed
- 23 explanation and timeline of the steps the district will take to
- 24 improve areas identified for improvement.
- 25
- 26 8. (New section) The Department of Education, the Department
- 27 of Children and Families, and the Department of Human Services
- 28 shall, in consultation with school districts, licensed child care
- 29 providers, Head Start program providers, and other stakeholders
- 30 identified by the Commissioner of Education, submit a report to the
- 31 Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1) no
- 32 later than March 1 next following the date of enactment of P.L. ,
- 33 c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill) 'and each
- 34 March 1 annually thereafter'¹ on the status of preschool education in
- 35 the State and the efficacy of the mixed delivery method of preschool
- 36 education. The Department of Education may utilize up to \$250,000 of
- 37 any appropriation for preschool education aid to contract temporary
- 38 staff to assist with the preparation of the report issued pursuant to this
- 39 section.
- 40
- 41 9. (New section) a. There is established in the Department of
- 42 Education a Universal Preschool Implementation Steering Committee.
- 43 The members of the committee shall be as follows:
- 44 (1) the Commissioner of Education, or a designee;
- 45 (2) the Commissioner of Children and Families, or a designee;
- 46 (3) the Commissioner of Human Services, or a designee;
- 47 (4) the Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development, or a
- 48 designee;

- 1 (5) the Commissioner of Health, or a designee;
- 2 (6) the Chief Executive Officer of the New Jersey Economic
- 3 Development Authority, or a designee;
- 4 (7) one member appointed by the President of the Senate, who
- 5 shall be an employee of the Legislature; and
- 6 (8) one member appointed by the Speaker of the General
- 7 Assembly, who shall be an employee of the Legislature.
- 8 b. The duties of the committee shall be as follows:
- 9 (1) recommending to the Governor and Legislature a funding
- 10 methodology for preschool costs to be implemented for all school
- 11 districts beginning in the 2028-2029 school year, which may include
- 12 proposing a Preschool Adequacy Budget and preschool education aid
- 13 formula modeled after the calculation of equalization aid pursuant to
- 14 section 11 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-53);
- 15 (2) evaluating the pilot program established pursuant to subsection
- 16 h. of section 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54) for school districts
- 17 that first receive preschool education aid in the 2025-2026, 2026-2027,
- 18 and 2027-2028 school years;
- 19 (3) proposing methods to incentivize school districts to pursue
- 20 mixed delivery partnerships with licensed child care providers and
- 21 Head Start programs;
- 22 (4) proposing optional methods for school districts to establish
- 23 centralized enrollment systems that prioritize family choice first in
- 24 determining a preschool student's placement setting;
- 25 (5) analyzing whether providing an adjustment to school districts'
- 26 tax levy growth limitation related to preschool costs is necessary or
- 27 beneficial to the State's preschool expansion efforts; and
- 28 (6) recommending any appropriate means by which the State can
- 29 seek to strengthen and expand the preschool workforce.
- 30 c. The steering committee ¹~~may~~ shall¹ convene one or more
- 31 local subcommittees to solicit input from local practitioners to
- 32 facilitate completion of the requirements set forth in subsection b. of
- 33 this section.
- 34 d. The steering committee shall organize within 90 days of the
- 35 effective date of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature
- 36 as this bill).
- 37
- 38 10. (New section) The Department of Education, in consultation
- 39 with the Department of Children and Families, shall develop and
- 40 periodically update a Mixed Delivery Model Preschool Handbook
- 41 to compile all State requirements and associated guidance
- 42 documents, organized by topic, deemed relevant by the
- 43 Commissioner of Education. The topics addressed in the handbook
- 44 shall include, but not be limited to:
- 45 a. funding and staffing requirements;
- 46 b. school district and licensed child care provider program
- 47 administration;
- 48 c. eligibility, recruitment, and enrollment;

- 1 d. family engagement;
- 2 e. curriculum;
- 3 f. child assessments;
- 4 g. classroom assessments and program evaluation;
- 5 h. optional strategies for school districts to establish centralized
- 6 enrollment systems that prioritize family choice first in determining
- 7 a preschool student's placement setting; and
- 8 i. strategies for supporting contracted licensed child care
- 9 providers in maintaining access to infant and toddler care.

10

11 11. (New section) In order to strengthen and expand the
12 preschool workforce, the Secretary of Higher Education shall
13 develop guidance encouraging two- and four-year public
14 institutions of higher education to enter into joint dual degree
15 admission agreements that require all credits earned toward Early
16 Childhood Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degrees to be
17 fully transferable and applicable to course requirements for
18 educator preparation programs at four-year institutions of higher
19 education.

20

21 ¹12. (New section) The Department of Children and Families,
22 in consultation with the Department of Human Services and
23 Department of Education, shall develop guidance for licensed child
24 care providers to establish graduated salary scales for private
25 teachers working toward preschool certification. The guidance
26 shall encourage the development of salary scales that provide salary
27 increases for increased academic preparation, including the
28 completion of a Child Development Associate credential, the
29 attainment of credits toward degree completion, the award of a
30 bachelor's degree in early childhood education, and the receipt of
31 an early childhood teacher certification. ¹

32

33 ¹13. 12.¹ N.J.S.18A:44-2 is amended to read as follows:

34 18A:44-2. a. The board of education of [any] a district [may]
35 serving elementary grades shall establish a kindergarten school or
36 kindergarten department, which in order to receive State aid shall
37 be a one-year program in advance of or in preparation for entrance
38 to first grade, in any school under its control, and [may admit to
39 such kindergarten school or department any child over the age of
40 four and under the age of five and] shall admit to [such] the
41 kindergarten school or department any child over the age of five
42 and under the age of six years as of October 1 of that school year
43 who is a resident of the district , but a board of education may, in its
44 discretion, admit any student who turns five after this date if they
45 meet entrance requirements as may be established by the rules and
46 regulations of the board through a board approved policy.

b. A kindergarten school or kindergarten department established by a board of education shall provide a full-day kindergarten program no later than the beginning of the 2029-2030 school year; provided, however, that a district not providing a full-day kindergarten program prior to the effective date of P.L. , c. (pending before the Legislature as this bill) may satisfy the requirements of this subsection by entering a sending-receiving relationship with a kindergarten school or kindergarten department established by the board of education of an adjacent school district. The tuition of students attending a kindergarten school or kindergarten department in another district in accordance with a sending-receive agreement shall be determined in accordance with N.J.S.18A:38-19. Attendance at a kindergarten school or kindergarten department shall be free in accordance with the requirements of N.J.S.18A:38-1.
(cf: P.L.1996, c.138, s.72)

¹**[14.]** 13.¹ Section 8 of P.L.2000, c.72 (C.18A:7G-8) is amended to read as follows:

8. a. The number of unhoused students shall be calculated as the number of FTE students who are projected to be enrolled in **[preschool for children with disabilities, preschool,]** kindergarten, grades 1 through 12, and special education services pupil educational programs provided in a district within five years, which are in excess of the functional capacity of the district's current school facilities or the functional capacity of the school facilities which will be available within five years other than the school facilities for which the preliminary eligible costs are determined, based upon the district's long-range facilities plan. The determination of unhoused capacity shall separately consider projected enrollments and functional capacities at the **[early childhood and]** elementary (**[preschool]** kindergarten through grade 5), middle (grades 6 through 8), and high school (grades 9 through 12) levels. For the purpose of calculating the district's unhoused students, special education services students shall be considered part of the grade level to which the students' chronological age corresponds. In the event that the commissioner approves a school facilities project which involves the construction of a new school facility to replace an existing school facility, which shall accommodate both the unhoused students and the students in the existing school facility, the calculation of the number of unhoused students shall include the number of students currently attending the existing facility which is to be replaced.

b. Approved area for unhoused students (AU) shall be determined according to the following formula:

$$AU = \mathbf{[(UEC \times SEC) +]} (UE \times SE) + (UM \times SM) + (UH \times SH)$$
where

1 **【UEC,】** UE, UM, UH are the numbers of unhoused students in
2 the **【early childhood,】** elementary, middle, and high school
3 enrollment categories, respectively; and

4 **【SEC,】** SE, SM, SH are the area allowances per FTE student in
5 **【preschool and】** kindergarten **【, grades 1】** through grade 5, grades
6 6 through 8, and grades 9 through 12, respectively. Area allowances
7 shall be determined based on the grade level of a student regardless
8 of the grade configurations used in the school buildings of the
9 district.

10 The minimum area allowance per FTE student shall be as
11 follows:

12 【Preschool】 <u>Kindergarten</u> through grade 5	125 sq. ft.
13 Grades 6 through 8	134 sq. ft.
14 Grades 9 through 12	151 sq. ft.

15 The commissioner, in consultation with the State Treasurer and
16 the Commissioner of Community Affairs, shall adopt regulations
17 that establish a process for the consideration of special
18 circumstances, in addition to those provided in section 5 of
19 P.L.2010, c.72 (C.18A:7G-5), in which the area allowances per FTE
20 student established pursuant to this subsection may be adjusted.
21 Any decision made by the commissioner pursuant to those
22 regulations shall be made in consultation with the State Treasurer
23 and the Commissioner of Community Affairs.

24 (cf: P.L.2017, c.131, s.18)

25

26 ¹**【15.】** 14.¹ (New section) The Commissioner of Education
27 shall adopt, pursuant to the “Administrative Procedure Act,”
28 P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), rules and regulations
29 necessary to effectuate the provisions of this act.

30

31 ¹**【16】** 15¹. This act shall take effect immediately ¹ ₁

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR

SENATE, No. 3910

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MAY 12, 2025

The Senate Education Committee favorably reports a Senate Committee Substitute for Senate Bill No. 3910.

This committee substitute is to be known as the “New Jersey Universal Preschool and Kindergarten Act.”

The substitute modified various statutes governing early childhood education in an effort to codify and expand on requirements that the Department of Education has previously established for providing State-funded preschool to build and sustain universal access to high-quality programs.

Preschool Expansion Grants

The substitute requires the Department of Education (DOE) to provide annual preschool expansion grants, defined as grants expanding free access to high-quality preschool for resident three- and four-year children in districts that do not, at the time of application for a grant, provide State-funded, high-quality, free preschool programs. Under the substitute, the Department’s preschool expansion grant program must include certain requirements.

Preschool Education Aid

The substitute also revises requirements for preschool education aid. The revisions include an update to the formula for determining each district’s allocation of preschool education aid to eliminate the use of District Factor Groups and specify the use of projected FTE enrollment for the upcoming year. The substitute also requires districts that receive preschool education aid to meet certain criteria concerning partnerships with licensed child care providers and Head Start programs, program planning, and self-assessment.

Preschool Cost-Sharing Pilot Program

The substitute establishes a three-year pilot program for a methodology for sharing preschool education costs between the State and participating school districts. A participating district is any district

receiving preschool education aid for the first time in 2025-2026, 2026-2027, or 2027-2028 school years. Under the pilot program, for participating school districts, preschool education aid is to be calculated by multiplying the district's district aid percentage by the amount calculated under the preschool education aid formula applicable to districts that received preschool education aid in the 2024-2025 school year. District aid percentage for this purpose is to equal to the greater of the district aid percentage as defined pursuant to section 3 of P.L.2000, c.72 (C.18A:7G-3) or 40 percent.

Universal Preschool Implementation Steering Committee

The committee substitute establishes in the Department of Education a Universal Preschool Implementation Steering Committee composed of representatives of various State agencies and the New Jersey Legislature.

Other Early Childhood Education Provisions

The committee substitute also:

- requires the DOE, Department of Children and Families, and Department of Human Services to maintain and annually update certain information regarding preschool and child care providers on their respective internet websites;
- requires these departments, in consultation with stakeholders, submit a report to the Legislature on the status of preschool education in the State and the efficacy of the mixed delivery method of preschool education;
- requires numerous State agencies to publish guidance on a variety of topics related to expanding access to high-quality preschool education in areas of greatest need; and
- removes preschool students from the population used to determine approved area for unhoused students for purposes of the DOE's administration of school facilities projects.

Finally, the committee substitute requires each elementary-serving school district in the State to establish a full-day kindergarten program no later than the beginning of the 2029-2030 school year. Attendance at the kindergarten program shall be free. School districts not providing full-day kindergarten by the effective date of this bill may satisfy this requirement by entering a sending-receiving relationship with an adjacent school district.

SENATE BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR **SENATE, No. 3910**

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 26, 2025

The Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments the Senate Committee Substitute for Senate Bill No. 3910.

As amended and reported, this bill is to be known as the “New Jersey Universal Preschool and Kindergarten Act.”

The bill modifies various statutes governing early childhood education in an effort to codify and expand on requirements that the Department of Education has previously established for providing State-funded preschool to build and sustain universal access to high-quality programs.

Preschool Expansion Grants

The bill requires the Department of Education (DOE) to provide annual preschool expansion grants, defined as grants expanding free access to high-quality preschool for resident three- and four-year children in districts that do not, at the time of application for a grant, provide State-funded, high-quality, free preschool programs. Pursuant to the bill, the department’s preschool expansion grant program is to include certain requirements.

Preschool Education Aid

The bill also revises requirements for preschool education aid. The revisions include an update to the formula for determining each district’s allocation of preschool education aid to eliminate the use of District Factor Groups and specify the use of projected FTE enrollment for the upcoming year. The bill also requires districts that receive preschool education aid to meet certain criteria concerning partnerships with licensed child care providers and Head Start programs, program planning, and self-assessment.

Preschool Cost-Sharing Pilot Program

The bill establishes a three-year pilot program for a methodology of sharing preschool education costs between the State and participating school districts. A participating district is any district receiving preschool education aid for the first time in the 2025-2026, 2026-2027, or 2027-2028 school years. Under the pilot program, preschool education aid for participating school districts is to be calculated by multiplying the district's district aid percentage by the amount calculated under the preschool education aid formula applicable to districts that received preschool education aid in the 2024-2025 school year. District aid percentage for this purpose is to equal to the greater of the district aid percentage as defined pursuant to the State school construction law or 40 percent.

Universal Preschool Implementation Steering Committee

The bill establishes in the Department of Education a Universal Preschool Implementation Steering Committee composed of representatives of various State agencies and the New Jersey Legislature.

Other Early Childhood Education Provisions

The bill also:

(1) requires the DOE, the Department of Children and Families, and the Department of Human Services to maintain and annually update certain information regarding preschool and child care providers on their respective Internet websites;

(2) requires the DOE, the Department of Children and Families, and the Department of Human Services, in consultation with stakeholders, to annually submit a report to the Legislature on the status of preschool education in the State and the efficacy of the mixed delivery method of preschool education;

(3) requires numerous State agencies to publish guidance on a variety of topics related to expanding access to high-quality preschool education in areas of greatest need; and

(4) removes preschool students from the population used to determine approved area for unhoused students for school facilities projects.

Finally, the bill requires each elementary-serving school district in the State to establish a full-day kindergarten program no later than the beginning of the 2029-2030 school year. Attendance at the kindergarten program shall be free. School districts not providing full-day kindergarten by the effective date of the bill may satisfy this requirement by entering into a sending-receiving relationship with an adjacent school district.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amended the bill to:

(1) provide that school districts applying for preschool expansion grants are to demonstrate due diligence to partner with all ready, willing, and able licensed child care providers and Head Start programs in the district's immediate and neighboring communities, in a manner determined by the Commissioner of Education, which is to include documentation of all efforts made by the applicant school district to engage with all licensed child care providers and Head Start programs in the applicant's immediate and neighboring communities;

(2) permit a school district applying for a preschool expansion grant to justify its decision not to use a mixed delivery model of preschool education by including evidence that extenuating circumstances in the school district's community limit accessibility to, or feasibility of partnership with, licensed childcare centers and Head Start programs;

(3) stipulate that the Department of Education, the Department of Children and Families, and the Department of Human Services are to maintain on their respective Internet websites a list of all districts offering State-funded preschool for a school year, instead of only districts receiving preschool expansion grants;

(4) provide that the Department of Education, the Department of Children and Families, and the Department of Human Services are to update the required information on their respective Internet websites in a timely manner after preschool expansion grants are awarded;

(5) require the report on the efficacy of the mixed delivery method of preschool education to be issued by the Department of Education, the Department of Children and Families, and the Department of Human Services on an annual basis;

(6) require, rather than permit, the Universal Preschool Implementation Steering Committee to convene one or more local subcommittees to solicit input from local practitioners; and

(7) make various technical changes to the bill.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Office of Legislative Services finds that this bill would lead to indeterminate increases in State costs. The provisions of the bill that impact the calculation of preschool education aid would result in no cost increase to the State because the bill largely codifies the preschool funding methodology incorporated in the annual appropriations act in recent years. The annual appropriations acts have provided preschool education aid for all students enrolled in State-funded preschool programs, regardless of the district factor group of the school districts operating the preschool programs. Additionally, the requirement that the State provide preschool expansion grants is not guaranteed to increase State costs, unless future appropriations acts increase the amount of funds available for the grants. The annual appropriations

act in recent years has included appropriations for preschool expansion grants, and the bill largely codifies budget language governing the program.

The bill also requires all school districts to provide for free, full-day kindergarten by the 2029-2030 school year, which would result in both local and State cost increases; however, the magnitude of the cost increase is unknown and would be spread across five years assuming this bill first takes effect in the 2025-2026 school year. Other provisions of the bill may result in marginal cost increases for the State and local school districts, to the extent that current resources are not sufficient to effectuate the purposes of the bill.

The bill could also result in indeterminate revenue increases for local school districts that first receive preschool education aid in the 2025-2026, 2026-2027, or 2027-2028 school years because these districts would have the ability to exceed the two percent levy growth limitation in order to account for additional preschool costs. The allowable increase would be limited to the actual costs of implementing a preschool program, which would vary significantly across districts based on the number of students enrolling and the availability of adequate facilities.

LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ESTIMATE
[First Reprint]
SENATE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR
SENATE, No. 3910
STATE OF NEW JERSEY
221st LEGISLATURE

DATED: JULY 3, 2025

SUMMARY

- Synopsis:** Makes various changes to provision of preschool aid and facilities requirements; establishes Universal Preschool Implementation Steering Committee; requires full-day kindergarten in all school districts.
- Type of Impact:** Potential State and local cost increases; local revenue increase.
- Agencies Affected:** Department of Education; local school districts.

Office of Legislative Services Estimate

Fiscal Impact	<u>Annual</u>
State Expenditure Increase	Indeterminate
Local Expenditure Increase	Indeterminate and variable by school district
Local Revenue Increase	Indeterminate and variable by school district

- The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) finds that this bill would lead to indeterminate increases in State costs. Some provisions of the bill may result in marginal cost increases for the State and local school districts, to the extent that current resources are not sufficient to effectuate the purposes of the bill.
- The bill requires all school districts to provide for free, full-day kindergarten by the 2029-2030 school year, which would result in both local and State cost increases; however, the magnitude of the cost increase is unknown and would be spread across five years assuming this bill first takes effect in the 2025-2026 school year.
- The bill could also result in indeterminate revenue increases for local school districts that first receive preschool education aid in the 2025-2026, 2026-2027, or 2027-2028 school years because these districts would have the ability to exceed the two percent tax levy growth limitation in order to account for additional preschool costs. The allowable increase would be limited to the actual costs of implementing a preschool program, which would vary

significantly across districts based on the number of students enrolling and the availability of adequate facilities.

- The provisions of the bill that impact the calculation of preschool education aid would result in no cost increase to the State because the bill largely codifies the preschool funding methodology incorporated in the annual appropriations act in recent years.
- Additionally, the requirement that the State provide preschool expansion grants is not guaranteed to increase State costs, unless future appropriations acts increase the amount of funds available for the grants. The annual appropriations act in recent years has included appropriations for preschool expansion grants, and the bill largely codifies budget language governing the program.

BILL DESCRIPTION

The bill modifies various statutes governing early childhood education in an effort to codify and expand on requirements that the Department of Education has previously established for providing State-funded preschool to build and sustain universal access to high-quality programs.

The bill revises requirements for preschool education aid. The revisions include an update to the formula for determining each district's allocation of preschool education aid to eliminate the use of District Factor Groups and specify the use of projected FTE enrollment for the upcoming year.

The bill also requires the department to provide annual preschool expansion grants, defined as grants expanding free access to high-quality preschool for resident three- and four-year old children in districts that do not, at the time of application for a grant, provide State-funded, high-quality, free preschool programs.

Additionally, the bill establishes a three-year pilot program for a methodology for sharing preschool education costs between the State and participating school districts. A participating district is any district receiving preschool education aid for the first time in the 2025-2026, 2026-2027, or 2027-2028 school years. Under the pilot program, preschool education aid for participating school districts is to be calculated by multiplying the district's district aid percentage by the amount calculated under the preschool education aid formula applicable to districts that received preschool education aid in the 2024-2025 school year. District aid percentage for this purpose is to be equal to the greater of the district aid percentage as defined pursuant to the State school construction law or 40 percent.

The bill also establishes in the Department of Education a Universal Preschool Implementation Steering Committee composed of representatives of various State agencies and the New Jersey Legislature and requires numerous State agencies to publish guidance on a variety of topics related to expanding access to high-quality preschool education in areas of greatest need.

Finally, the bill requires each elementary-serving school district in the State to establish a full-day kindergarten program no later than the beginning of the 2029-2030 school year. Attendance at the kindergarten program shall be free. School districts not providing full-day kindergarten by the effective date of the amended bill may satisfy this requirement by entering into a sending-receiving relationship with an adjacent school district.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

None received.

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES

The OLS finds that this bill would lead to indeterminate increases in State costs and local revenues, as described in detail below.

Preschool Education Aid

Under current law, school districts have different levels of requirement to provide free preschool based on the district’s status as a universal preschool district or a targeted preschool district, which is determined by socioeconomic factors and the proportion of at-risk students in the district. The bill eliminates targeted preschool districts and instead provides that, for districts that received preschool education aid in the 2024-2025 school year, preschool education aid would be provided for all preschool aged students enrolled in the district. This change is a codification of policy that has been implemented in recent annual appropriations acts. Consequently, this provision of the bill is not expected to result in any increased State costs.

Preschool Expansion Aid

This bill also includes requirements that the Department of Education provide preschool expansion grants in each year for school districts to expand access to high-quality preschool for resident three- and four-year old children. The cost of these grants is conditional on the amount included in the annual appropriations acts, and the bill does not stipulate any requirements for determining the amounts, or increasing or decreasing the appropriation in successive years. For the purposes of illustration, the table below shows the portion of preschool education aid dedicated to preschool expansion grants in recent appropriations acts.

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Preschool Expansion Grants</u>
2020	\$20,000,000
2021	\$10,000,000
2022	\$26,000,000
2023	\$40,000,000
2024	\$40,000,000
2025	\$20,000,000
2026 (Proposed)	\$10,000,000

Cost-Sharing Pilot Program

The bill establishes a pilot program in which school districts first receiving preschool education aid in the 2025-2026, 2026-2027, or 2027-2028 school years would receive a percentage of the amount of preschool education aid calculated for the district and be responsible for supporting the remaining costs with local funds. In order to do so, school districts would be permitted to increase their general fund tax levies beyond the two percent tax levy growth limitation, but only by the

amount of actual preschool costs less the amount of preschool education aid received. The OLS is unable to estimate the magnitude of this revenue increase for school districts because actual costs vary across districts and the districts that may receive preschool education aid for the first time have not yet been identified. However, for the purposes of illustration, the OLS notes that the average school district spends \$8,065 per preschool pupil and average enrollment in the first year of receiving preschool education aid is 17 students. Based on these numbers, the average first year costs for preschool programs is \$137,105.

In addition to the local revenue increase, the pilot program would decrease State costs by requiring the State to provide only a percentage of preschool education aid to participating districts. The magnitude of the savings is unknown, as the percentage for which the State is responsible is not static and depends on the district.

Full-Day Kindergarten

The OLS finds that the provision of the bill that requires all school districts to provide for free full-day kindergarten by the 2029-2030 school year would result in indeterminate cost increases for the State and local school districts. As of the 2024-2025 school year, only 10 school districts do not provide free full-day kindergarten, some of which have taken steps to begin implementing full-day kindergarten. The cost of implementing free full-day kindergarten differs substantially based on the districts. The most substantial cost appears to be obtaining adequate facilities, either through renovations or new construction, or the purchase or lease of buildings. Several districts have conducted bond referendums to obtain funds for facilities needs in order to implement full-day kindergarten. For the purposes of illustration, the table below details some of the estimates provided in these referendums.

School District	2024-2025 Half-Day Kindergarten Enrollment	Referendum Details
Westfield Public Schools	184	The district has estimated that \$37.2 million would be needed to address facilities needs associated with implementing full-day kindergarten.
Cranford Public School District	224	The district estimated \$75.0 million was needed for facilities improvements across the district, including renovations to accommodate full-day kindergarten.
Moorestown Township Public School District	243	The district proposed a referendum for \$112.6 million for district-wide facilities needs, of which \$17.1 million is intended for elementary schools in the district. The projects included in the cost for elementary school needs include renovations for kindergarten classrooms.
Haddonfield School District	149	The district passed a referendum for \$46.7 million for district-wide facilities needs. The project estimate for all renovations at the school providing kindergarten is \$3.8 million, including the addition of three new classrooms.

In addition to facilities needs, implementing free full-day kindergarten would likely result in districts hiring additional staff. The cost of this would be dependent on the number of students enrolled in the district and the ratio of students to staff. While these needs would increase local costs, school districts would also receive increased State aid for students enrolled in full-day

kindergarten compared to half-day kindergarten. The total amount of additional State aid is unknown because it would depend on each district’s local share. The table below shows estimates from some school districts for the operational cost of implementing full-day kindergarten.

School District	2024-2025 Half-Day Kindergarten Enrollment	Estimated Operational Needs
Millstone Township School District	95	\$500,000
Westfield Public Schools	184	\$3.5 million
Cranford Public School District	224	\$1.3 million

It should also be noted that the bill requires school districts to implement free full-day kindergarten by the 2029-2030 school year, which means that cost increases to the State could be spread out across multiple fiscal years depending on when each of the districts began implementing full-day kindergarten.

Miscellaneous Costs

There may be other costs associated with the bill which would likely be marginal and dependent on existing resources.

The bill requires school districts that receive preschool education aid to submit annual program plans detailing the status of the district’s preschool program and participate in a system of self-assessment that includes a visit by a State team once every three years. This may result in additional local costs to the extent that these plans and assessments are not already conducted by local school districts and would require additional resources to do so. The visits by State teams may also increase State costs to the extent that these visits are conducted separately from other State assessment processes.

The bill also establishes the Universal Preschool Implementation Steering Committee to evaluate and make recommendations concerning preschool funding and preschool requirements. There may be marginal costs for the State associated with convening local subcommittees to solicit input from local providers and compiling recommendations for the Governor and the Legislature.

Additionally, the bill requires the Department of Education, in consultation with the Department of Children and Families, to develop and periodically update a Mixed Delivery Model Preschool Handbook. There may be marginal costs for the State associated with the compilation of this handbook to the extent that existing resources are not sufficient to effectuate the provisions of the bill.

Section: Education
Analyst: Abigail Chambers
Senior Fiscal Analyst
Approved: Thomas Koenig
Legislative Budget and Finance Officer

This legislative fiscal estimate has been produced by the Office of Legislative Services due to the failure of the Executive Branch to respond to our request for a fiscal note.

This fiscal estimate has been prepared pursuant to P.L.1980, c.67 (C.52:13B-6 et seq.).

ASSEMBLY, No. 5717

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

221st LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MAY 22, 2025

Sponsored by:

Assemblywoman ANDREA KATZ

District 8 (Atlantic and Burlington)

SYNOPSIS

Makes various changes to provision of preschool aid and facilities requirements; establishes Universal Preschool Implementation Steering Committee; requires full-day kindergarten in all school districts.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



1 **AN ACT** concerning early childhood education, amending various
2 parts of the statutory law, and supplementing P.L.2007, c.260.

3
4 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
5 *of New Jersey:*

6
7 1. (New section) Sections 1 and 2, 6 through 12, and 15 of this
8 act shall be known and may be cited as the “New Jersey Universal
9 Preschool and Kindergarten Act.”

10
11 2. (New section) The Legislature finds and declares that:

12 a. Research is clear that high-quality preschool can change the
13 educational trajectories of young children, particularly
14 economically disadvantaged children and multilingual learners.
15 Improvements in literacy, numeracy, social-emotional and self-
16 regulatory development, and lifetime earnings have been
17 demonstrated among individuals who attend high-quality preschool
18 compared to their peers.

19 b. New Jersey leads the nation in expanding access to high-
20 quality preschool opportunities. The State has achieved a unique
21 and world-class combination of significant financial investment and
22 rigorous quality standards. New Jersey State-funded preschools are
23 required to serve three- and four-year olds in full-day programs
24 featuring small class sizes led by quality instructors with ample
25 curriculum support, professional development, and accommodations
26 for students with special needs. New Jersey’s State spending on
27 preschool is among the highest in the country, with clear,
28 significant impacts on our public school system: tens of thousands
29 of three- and four-year olds in hundreds of communities around the
30 State attend transformative high-quality early education programs.

31 c. District-operated preschool programs, licensed childcare
32 centers, and Head Start programs form an interrelated and
33 interdependent early childhood ecosystem. Each component is made
34 stronger by the other, and the system is greater and more impactful
35 than the sum of its parts. No component can reach its full potential
36 without the facilities, staff, resources, and expertise of the others.
37 Together, the system represents a continuum of education and care
38 services from birth through age five necessary not only for children
39 to realize their full life potential, but for families to participate fully
40 in economic and civic society. To lift up this system is a moral and
41 economic imperative.

42 d. To build on the State’s preschool expansion progress to date
43 and to realize the full benefits of high-quality preschool, it is fitting
44 and proper for the State to enshrine certain policies and values in
45 State law, including:

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [thus] in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

- 1 (1) providing sustainable, annual financial support for
- 2 expanding access to high-quality preschool;
- 3 (2) codifying preschool education aid provisions previously
- 4 implemented through language in various annual appropriations
- 5 acts and harmonizing New Jersey law accordingly;
- 6 (3) prioritizing expansion for economically disadvantaged
- 7 families and communities;
- 8 (4) requiring State-funded preschool programs to make every
- 9 effort to partner with local ready, willing, and able licensed
- 10 childcare providers and Head Start programs; and
- 11 (5) conducting ongoing evaluations of the State's approach to
- 12 early childhood and preschool education to ensure that policy
- 13 continues to reflect stakeholder expertise and evolving research.

14 e. In addition to high-quality preschool education, full-day
15 kindergarten is necessary not only to unlock a child's full learning
16 potential, but to facilitate a smooth transition from high-quality
17 preschool into elementary programs.

18

19 3. Section 3 of P.L.2007, c.62 (C.18A:7F-38) is amended to read
20 as follows:

21 3. a. Notwithstanding the provisions of any other law to the
22 contrary, a school district shall not adopt a budget pursuant to
23 sections 5 and 6 of P.L.1996, c.138 (C.18A:7F-5 and 18A:7F-6)
24 with an increase in its adjusted tax levy that exceeds, except as
25 provided in subsection e. of section 4 of P.L.2007, c.62 (C.18A:7F-
26 39), the tax levy growth limitation calculated as follows: the sum of
27 the prebudget year adjusted tax levy and the adjustment for
28 increases in enrollment multiplied by 2.0 percent, and adjustments
29 for an increase in health care costs, increases in amounts for certain
30 normal and accrued liability pension contributions set forth in
31 sections 1 and 2 of P.L.2009, c.19 amending section 24 of
32 P.L.1954, c.84 (C.43:15A-24) and section 15 of P.L.1944, c.255
33 (C.43:16A-15) for the year set forth in those sections, **[and,]** in the
34 case of an SDA district as defined pursuant to section 3 of
35 P.L.2000, c.72 (C.18A:7G-3), during the 2018-2019 through the
36 2024-2025 school years, increases to raise a general fund tax levy to
37 an amount that does not exceed its local share , and, in the case of a
38 school district first receiving preschool education aid in the 2025-
39 2026, 2026-2027, or 2027-2028 school years and participating in
40 the pilot program established by the commissioner pursuant to
41 subsection h. of 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54), increases to
42 raise a general fund tax levy for the local share of preschool
43 education costs.

44 b. (1) The allowable adjustment for increases in enrollment
45 authorized pursuant to subsection a. of this section shall equal the
46 per pupil prebudget year adjusted tax levy multiplied by EP, where
47 EP equals the sum of:

1 (a) 0.50 for each unit of weighted resident enrollment that
2 constitutes an increase from the prebudget year over 1%, but not
3 more than 2.5%;

4 (b) 0.75 for each unit of weighted resident enrollment that
5 constitutes an increase from the prebudget year over 2.5%, but not
6 more than 4%; and

7 (c) 1.00 for each unit of weighted resident enrollment that
8 constitutes an increase from the prebudget year over 4%.

9 (2) A school district may request approval from the
10 commissioner to calculate EP equal to 1.00 for any increase in
11 weighted resident enrollment if it can demonstrate that the
12 calculation pursuant to paragraph (1) of this subsection would result
13 in an average class size that exceeds 10% above the facilities
14 efficiency standards established pursuant to P.L.2000, c.72
15 (C.18A:7G-1 et al.).

16 c. (Deleted by amendment, P.L.2010, c.44)

17 d. (1) The allowable adjustment for increases in health care costs
18 authorized pursuant to subsection a. of this section shall equal that
19 portion of the actual increase in total health care costs for the
20 budget year, less any withdrawals from the current expense
21 emergency reserve account for increases in total health care costs,
22 that exceeds 2.0 percent of the total health care costs in the
23 prebudget year, but that is not in excess of the product of the total
24 health care costs in the prebudget year multiplied by the average
25 percentage increase of the State Health Benefits Program, P.L.1961,
26 c.49 (C.52:14-17.25 et seq.), as annually determined by the
27 Division of Pensions and Benefits in the Department of the
28 Treasury.

29 (2) The allowable adjustment for increases in the amount of
30 normal and accrued liability pension contributions authorized
31 pursuant to subsection a. of this section shall equal that portion of
32 the actual increase in total normal and accrued liability pension
33 contributions for the budget year that exceeds 2.0 percent of the
34 total normal and accrued liability pension contributions in the
35 prebudget year.

36 (3) In the case of an SDA district, as defined pursuant to section
37 3 of P.L.2000, c.72 (C.18A:7G-3), in which the prebudget year
38 adjusted tax levy is less than the school district's prebudget year
39 local share as calculated pursuant to section 10 of P.L.2007, c.260
40 (C.18A:7F-52), the allowable adjustment for increases to raise a tax
41 levy that does not exceed the school district's local share shall equal
42 the difference between the prebudget year adjusted tax levy and the
43 prebudget year local share.

44 (4) In the case of a school district first receiving preschool
45 education aid in the 2025-2026, 2026-2027, or 2027-2028 school
46 years and participating in the pilot program established by the
47 commissioner pursuant to subsection h. of 12 of P.L.2007, c.260
48 (C.18A:7F-54), the allowable adjustment for increases to raise a

1 general fund tax levy for the local share of preschool education
2 costs shall be equal to the actual increase required to provide
3 preschool education under the pilot program less State aid provided
4 pursuant to subsection h. of 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54).

5 A school district first receiving preschool education aid in the
6 2025-2026 school year and participating in the pilot program
7 established by the commissioner pursuant to subsection h. of 12 of
8 P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54) may, prior to the delivery of tax
9 bills pursuant to R.S.54:4-64, recertify to the county board of
10 taxation the sum to be raised in the district during the ensuing
11 school year if the change in the amount to be raised is equal to the
12 district's local share of preschool education costs for that school
13 year.

14 e. (Deleted by amendment, P.L.2010, c.44)

15 f. The adjusted tax levy shall be increased or decreased
16 accordingly whenever the responsibility and associated cost of a
17 school district activity is transferred to another school district or
18 governmental entity.

19 (cf: P.L.2018, c.67, s.6)

20
21 4. Section 3 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-45) is amended to
22 read as follows:

23 3. As used in **【this act】** P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-43 et al.)
24 and P.L.1996, c.138 (C.18A:7F-1 et al.), unless the context clearly
25 requires a different meaning:

26 "At-risk pupils" means those resident pupils from households
27 with a household income at or below the most recent federal
28 poverty guidelines available on October 15 of the prebudget year
29 multiplied by 1.85;

30 "Base per pupil amount" means the cost per elementary pupil of
31 delivering the core curriculum content standards and extracurricular
32 and cocurricular activities necessary for a thorough and efficient
33 education;

34 "Bilingual education pupil" means a resident pupil enrolled in a
35 program of bilingual education or in an English as a second
36 language program approved by the State Board of Education;

37 "Budgeted local share" means the district's local tax levy
38 contained in the budget certified for taxation purposes;

39 "Capital outlay" means capital outlay as defined in GAAP;

40 "Combination pupil" means a resident pupil who is both an at-
41 risk pupil and a bilingual education pupil;

42 "Commissioner" means the Commissioner of Education;

43 "Concentration of at-risk pupils" shall be based on prebudget
44 year pupil data and means, for a school district or a county
45 vocational school district, the number of at-risk pupils among those
46 counted in resident enrollment, divided by resident enrollment;

1 "County special services school district" means any entity
2 established pursuant to article 8 of chapter 46 of Title 18A of the
3 New Jersey Statutes;

4 "County vocational school district" means any entity established
5 pursuant to article 3 of chapter 54 of Title 18A of the New Jersey
6 Statutes;

7 "CPI" means the increase, expressed as a decimal, in the average
8 annualized consumer price index for the New York City and
9 Philadelphia areas in the fiscal year preceding the prebudget year
10 relative to the previous fiscal year as reported by the United States
11 Department of Labor;

12 "Debt service" means payments of principal and interest upon
13 school bonds and other obligations issued to finance the purchase or
14 construction of school facilities, additions to school facilities, or the
15 reconstruction, remodeling, alteration, modernization, renovation or
16 repair of school facilities, including furnishings, equipment,
17 architect fees, and the costs of issuance of such obligations and
18 shall include payments of principal and interest upon bonds
19 heretofore issued to fund or refund such obligations, and upon
20 municipal bonds and other obligations which the commissioner
21 approves as having been issued for such purposes;

22 "District income" means the aggregate income of the residents of
23 the taxing district or taxing districts, based upon data provided by
24 the Division of Taxation in the New Jersey Department of the
25 Treasury and contained on the New Jersey State Income Tax forms
26 for the calendar year ending two years prior to the prebudget year.
27 The commissioner may supplement data contained on the State
28 Income Tax forms with data available from other State or federal
29 agencies in order to better correlate the data to that collected on the
30 federal census. With respect to regional districts and their
31 constituent districts, however, the district income as described
32 above shall be allocated among the regional and constituent districts
33 in proportion to the number of pupils resident in each of them;

34 "Equalized valuation" means the equalized valuation of the
35 taxing district or taxing districts, as certified by the Director of the
36 Division of Taxation on October 1, or subsequently revised by the
37 tax court by January 15, of the prebudget year. With respect to
38 regional districts and their constituent districts, however, the
39 equalized valuations as described above shall be allocated among
40 the regional and constituent districts in proportion to the number of
41 pupils resident in each of them. In the event that the equalized table
42 certified by the director shall be revised by the tax court after
43 January 15 of the prebudget year, the revised valuations shall be
44 used in the recomputation of aid for an individual school district
45 filing an appeal, but shall have no effect upon the calculation of the
46 property value rate, Statewide average equalized school tax rate, or
47 Statewide equalized total tax rate;

1 "Full-day preschool" means a preschool day consisting of a
2 minimum six-hour comprehensive educational program in
3 accordance with the district's kindergarten through grade 12 school
4 calendar;

5 "GAAP" means the generally accepted accounting principles
6 established by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board as
7 prescribed by the State board pursuant to N.J.S.18A:4-14;

8 "General special education services pupil" means a pupil
9 receiving specific services pursuant to chapter 46 of Title 18A of
10 the New Jersey Statutes;

11 "Geographic cost adjustment" means an adjustment that reflects
12 county differences in the cost of providing educational services that
13 are outside the control of the district;

14 "Household income" means income as defined in 7 CFR ss.245.2
15 and 245.6 or any subsequent superseding federal law or regulation;

16 "Net budget" means the sum of the district's general fund tax
17 levy, State aid received pursuant to the provisions of this act other
18 than preschool education aid, miscellaneous revenue estimated
19 pursuant to GAAP, and designated general fund balance;

20 **["Prebudget year" means the school fiscal year preceding the**
21 **year in which the school budget is implemented;]**

22 "Nonpreschool ECPA" means the amount of early childhood
23 program aid, excluding prior year carry-forward amounts, included
24 in a district's 2007-2008 school year budget certified for taxes that
25 was allocated to grades K through 3;

26 "Prebudget year" means the school fiscal year preceding the year
27 in which the school budget is implemented;

28 "Preschool expansion grant" means any grant funded by a
29 portion of preschool education aid allocated by the Commissioner
30 of Education or any other State funds appropriated for the purpose
31 of expanding free access to high-quality preschool for resident
32 three- and four-year old children in districts that do not, at the time
33 of application for a grant, provide State-funded, high-quality, free
34 preschool programs;

35 "Report" means the Educational Adequacy Report issued by the
36 commissioner pursuant to section 4 of this act;

37 "Resident enrollment" means the number of pupils other than
38 preschool pupils, post-graduate pupils, and post-secondary
39 vocational pupils who, on the last school day prior to October 16 of
40 the current school year, are residents of the district and are enrolled
41 in: (1) the public schools of the district, excluding evening schools,
42 (2) another school district, other than a county vocational school
43 district in the same county on a full-time basis, or a State college
44 demonstration school or private school to which the district of
45 residence pays tuition, or (3) a State facility in which they are
46 placed by the district; or are residents of the district and are: (1)
47 receiving home instruction, or (2) in a shared-time vocational

1 program and are regularly attending a school in the district and a
2 county vocational school district. In addition, resident enrollment
3 shall include the number of pupils who, on the last school day prior
4 to October 16 of the prebudget year, are residents of the district and
5 in a State facility in which they were placed by the State. Pupils in
6 a shared-time vocational program shall be counted on an equated
7 full-time basis in accordance with procedures to be established by
8 the commissioner. Resident enrollment shall include regardless of
9 nonresidence, the enrolled children of teaching staff members of the
10 school district or county vocational school district who are
11 permitted, by contract or local district policy, to enroll their
12 children in the educational program of the school district or county
13 vocational school district without payment of tuition. Disabled
14 children between three and five years of age and receiving programs
15 and services pursuant to N.J.S.18A:46-6 shall be included in the
16 resident enrollment of the district;

17 "School district" means any local or regional school district
18 established pursuant to chapter 8 or chapter 13 of Title 18A of the
19 New Jersey Statutes;

20 "State facility" means a State developmental center, a State
21 Division of Youth and Family Services' residential center, a State
22 residential mental health center, a Department of Children and
23 Families Regional Day School, a State training school/secure care
24 facility, a State juvenile community program, a juvenile detention
25 center or a boot camp under the supervisory authority of the
26 Youth Justice Commission pursuant to P.L.1995, c.284 (C.52:17B-
27 169 et seq.), or an institution operated by or under contract with the
28 Department of Corrections, Children and Families or Human
29 Services, or the Youth Justice Commission;

30 "Statewide equalized school tax rate" means the amount
31 calculated by dividing the general fund tax levy for all school
32 districts, which excludes county vocational school districts and
33 county special services school districts as defined pursuant to this
34 section, in the State for the prebudget year by the equalized
35 valuations certified in the year prior to the prebudget year of all
36 taxing districts in the State except taxing districts for which there
37 are not school tax levies;

38 "Tax levy growth limitation" means the permitted annual
39 increase in the adjusted tax levy for a school district as calculated
40 pursuant to sections 3 and 4 of P.L.2007, c.62 (C.18A:7F-38 and
41 18A:7F-39).

42 (cf: P.L.2025, c.35, s.37)

43

44 5. Section 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54) is amended to
45 read as follows:

46 12. a. **■**District factor group A and B school districts, and district
47 factor group CD school districts with a concentration of at-risk
48 pupils equal to or greater than 40%, shall provide free access to

1 full-day preschool for all three- and four-year old pupils. All other
2 school districts shall provide free access to full-day preschool for
3 at-risk pupils. Preschool education aid shall reflect the cost of the
4 pupil's placement in either a district program, a licensed child care
5 provider program, or a Head Start Program.】 (Deleted by
6 amendment, P.L. , c.) (pending before the Legislature as this
7 bill)

8 (1) **【Preschool】** In the case of a school district that received
9 preschool education aid in the 2024-2025 school year, preschool
10 education aid shall be calculated **【for district factor group A and B**
11 school districts, and for district factor group CD school districts
12 with a concentration of at-risk pupils equal to or greater than 40%,**】**
13 as follows:

14
$$\text{Aid} = (\text{IDE} \times \text{IDA}) + (\text{PRE} \times \text{PRA}) + (\text{HSE} \times \text{HSA})$$

15 where

16 IDE is the **【number】** projected FTE enrollment for the upcoming
17 school year of district pupils, other than preschool disabled pupils,
18 in an in-district preschool program;

19 IDA is the per pupil aid amount for an in-district preschool
20 program;

21 PRE is the **【number】** projected FTE enrollment for the upcoming
22 school year of district pupils, other than preschool disabled pupils,
23 in a preschool program operated by a licensed child care provider;

24 PRA is the per pupil aid amount for a preschool program
25 operated by a licensed child care provider;

26 HSE is the **【number】** projected FTE enrollment for the
27 upcoming school year of district pupils, other than preschool
28 disabled pupils, in a Head Start Program; and

29 HSA is the per pupil aid amount for a Head Start Program.

30 **【A CD school district with a concentration of at-risk pupils equal to**
31 **or greater than 40% shall be eligible to receive preschool education**
32 **aid pursuant to the provisions of this paragraph for a minimum of**
33 **three school years from the time of initial determination of**
34 **eligibility even if the district's concentration of at-risk pupils falls**
35 **below a 40% concentration of at-risk pupils. In the event that the**
36 **district falls below a 40% concentration of at-risk pupils for two**
37 **consecutive school years, in the third school year the district shall**
38 **receive preschool education aid for each at-risk pupil and for any**
39 **four-year old pupil for whom the district received preschool**
40 **education aid in the prior school year, and that pupil shall receive**
41 **free preschool education.】**

42 (2) **【Preschool education aid shall be calculated for all other**
43 **districts as follows:**

44
$$\text{Aid} = (\text{ARID} \times \text{IDA}) + (\text{ARP} \times \text{PRA}) + (\text{ARHS} \times \text{HSA})$$

45 where

46 ARID is the number of at-risk district pupils, other than
47 preschool disabled pupils, in an in-district preschool program;

1 IDA is the per pupil aid amount for an in-district preschool
2 program;

3 ARP is the number of at-risk district pupils, other than preschool
4 disabled pupils, in a preschool program operated by a licensed child
5 care provider;

6 PRA is the per pupil aid amount for a preschool program
7 operated by a licensed child care provider;

8 ARHS is the number of at-risk district pupils, other than
9 preschool disabled pupils, in a Head Start Program; and

10 HSA is the per pupil aid amount for a Head Start Program.】
11 (Deleted by amendment, P.L. _____, c. _____) (pending before the
12 Legislature as this bill)

13 b. 【In accordance with regulations adopted by the
14 commissioner, all districts shall submit a five-year plan that
15 provides for the full implementation of full-day preschool for all
16 eligible three- and four-year olds by the 2013-2014 school year. For
17 the purposes of this section, "full implementation" means serving
18 90% of eligible pupils in accordance with the preschool quality
19 standards adopted by the commissioner or such greater percentage
20 as determined by the commissioner. A school district shall annually
21 update the five-year plan based on actual implementation
22 experience and shall revise its pupil projections in accordance with
23 that experience.】 (Deleted by amendment, P.L. _____, c. _____) (pending
24 before the Legislature as this bill)

25 c. (1) 【In the case of a school district that did not receive any
26 form of preschool aid in the 2007-2008 school year, the 2008-2009
27 school year shall be a preschool planning year. Beginning in the
28 2009-2010 school year, the school district shall receive preschool
29 education aid calculated in accordance with the provisions of
30 subsection a. of this section based upon projected preschool
31 enrollment.

32 In the 2009-2010 school year the school district may also receive
33 start-up funds in accordance with regulations adopted by the
34 commissioner.】 (Deleted by amendment, P.L. _____, c. _____) (pending
35 before the Legislature as this bill)

36 (2) In the case of a school district that received Early Launch to
37 Learning Initiative aid in the 2007-2008 school year, 【for the 2008-
38 2009 school year the district shall receive preschool education aid
39 in an amount equal to the district's allocation of Early Launch to
40 Learning Initiative aid in the 2007-2008 school year. Beginning in
41 the 2009-2010 school year,】 the school district shall receive
42 preschool education aid calculated in accordance with the
43 provisions of paragraph (1) of subsection a. of this section 【based
44 upon projected preschool enrollment.

45 In the 2009-2010 school year the school district may also receive
46 start-up funds in accordance with regulations adopted by the
47 commissioner】 pending a determination by the commissioner that

1 the district is prepared to meet all program requirements for high-
2 quality preschool pursuant to regulations adopted by the
3 commissioner.

4 (3) In the case of a school district that received early childhood
5 program aid in the 2007-2008 school year but did not receive
6 preschool expansion aid or education opportunity aid in that year,
7 **【**for the 2008-2009 school year the district shall receive preschool
8 education aid equal to the greater of the district's 2007-2008 amount
9 of early childhood program aid for preschool or the district's 2007-
10 2008 per pupil allocation of early childhood program aid as
11 included in the district's original 2007-2008 budget certified for
12 taxes, inflated by the CPI, and multiplied by the district's projected
13 preschool enrollment; except that if the district is able to
14 demonstrate in the five-year plan submitted to the commissioner
15 that it has the capacity to offer a full-day three- or four-year-old
16 program, or a full-day three- and four-year-old program, in the
17 2008-2009 school year, the commissioner may approve the funding
18 of the full-day program calculated in accordance with the provisions
19 of subsection a. of this section based upon projected preschool
20 enrollment. The district shall be informed of the commissioner's
21 determination upon approval of the five-year plan. Beginning in the
22 2009-2010 school year,**】** the school district shall receive preschool
23 education aid calculated in accordance with the provisions of
24 paragraph (1) of subsection a. of this section **【**based upon projected
25 preschool enrollment.

26 In the 2009-2010 school year the school district may also receive
27 start-up funds in accordance with regulations adopted by the
28 commissioner**】** pending a determination by the commissioner that
29 the district is prepared to meet all program requirements for high-
30 quality preschool pursuant to regulations adopted by the
31 commissioner.

32 (4) **【**In the case of a school district that received preschool
33 expansion aid or education opportunity aid in the 2007-2008 school
34 year, for the 2008-2009 school year the district shall receive
35 preschool education aid in an amount equal to the preschool budget
36 approved by the commissioner for the 2008-2009 school year.
37 Preschool education aid for the 2008-2009 school year shall be
38 adjusted following receipt of the Application for State School Aid
39 in October 2008. Beginning in the 2009-2010 school year, the
40 school district shall receive preschool education aid calculated in
41 accordance with the provisions of subsection a. of this section based
42 upon projected preschool enrollment; except that for any school
43 year the district shall not receive preschool aid in an amount less
44 than either the total amount of preschool aid the district received in
45 the 2008-2009 school year after the State aid adjustment or the
46 district's 2008-2009 school year preschool per pupil aid amount

1 multiplied by the projected number of preschool pupils after the
2 State aid adjustment, whichever is greater.

3 In the 2009-2010 school year the school district may also receive
4 start-up funds in accordance with regulations adopted by the
5 commissioner.】 (Deleted by amendment, P.L. , c.) (pending
6 before the Legislature as this bill)

7 d. For the 2008-2009 school year, the preschool per pupil aid
8 amounts shall be \$11,506 for pupils enrolled in an in-district
9 program, \$12,934 for pupils enrolled in a licensed child care
10 provider program, and \$7,146 for pupils enrolled in a Head Start
11 Program. The preschool per pupil aid amounts shall be adjusted by
12 the CPI in the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school years as required
13 pursuant to subsection b. of section 4 of this act. For subsequent
14 school years, the preschool per pupil aid amounts shall be
15 established in the Educational Adequacy Report, with the amounts
16 adjusted by the CPI for each of the two school years following the
17 first school year to which the report is applicable.

18 e. A district shall appropriate preschool education aid in a
19 special revenue fund for expenditure. In the event that any
20 preschool education aid is not expended during the budget year, the
21 aid may be carried forward in accordance with regulations adopted
22 by the commissioner.

23 f. In the event that a district has fully implemented a full-day
24 preschool program for three- and four-year old pupils 【in
25 accordance with its five-year plan】 and meets the preschool quality
26 standards or has provided preschool education to the number of
27 eligible students to be served during a school year in accordance
28 with 【that plan and its annual updates and】 the preschool quality
29 standards, the district may appropriate preschool education aid 【to
30 support kindergarten through grade 12 or to provide preschool
31 education for three- and four-year old pupils for whom the district
32 is not required to provide preschool education upon the approval of
33 the commissioner. The district shall request approval in its annual
34 plan update and any approval granted by the commissioner shall be
35 made during the annual school budget process】 for additional
36 purposes that may be designated by the commissioner, which
37 purposes shall include, but not be limited to, providing summer
38 programming for preschool students, professional development for
39 preschool staff, preschool facilities improvements, and
40 transportation services for preschool pupils.

41 g. A school district shall maintain the preschool quality
42 standards as adopted by the commissioner as a condition of receipt
43 of preschool education aid.

44 h. In the case of a school district that first receives preschool
45 education aid in the 2025-2026, 2026-2027, or 2027-2028 school
46 years, the aid shall be provided, within the limit of available
47 appropriations, pursuant to a three-year pilot program established

1 by the commissioner that includes a cost sharing methodology
2 between the State and the school district such that the amount of
3 preschool education aid allocated to the district shall be calculated
4 by multiplying the district aid percentage by the amount calculated
5 pursuant to the formula in paragraph (1) of subsection a. of this
6 section, where the district aid percentage shall be equal to the
7 greater of the district aid percentage as defined pursuant to section 3
8 of P.L.2000, c.72 (C.18A:7G-3) or 40 percent of eligible costs.

9 i. A school district receiving preschool education aid shall
10 obtain approval by the Commissioner of Education, in a manner
11 prescribed by the commissioner, prior to implementing any
12 significant redistribution, as defined by the commissioner, of State-
13 funded preschool seats among district-operated programs, licensed
14 child care providers, and Head Start programs.

15 (cf: P.L.2007, c.260, s.12)

16
17 6. (New section) a. The Department of Education shall, within
18 the limit of funds appropriated, annually provide at least one
19 opportunity to award preschool expansion grants in accordance with
20 the provisions of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the
21 Legislature as this bill). A school district shall be eligible to apply
22 for and receive a preschool expansion grant if the district provides
23 full-day kindergarten at the time of application and meets any other
24 criteria the Commissioner of Education deems appropriate. An
25 eligible school district shall submit an application to the
26 commissioner, in a manner and form determined by the
27 commissioner, which application shall include, but not be limited
28 to, the following:

29 (1) a general overview of the district's proposed preschool
30 program operational plan;

31 (2) enrollment projections for preschool students, other than
32 preschool students with disabilities, for the next five years;

33 (3) a description of the district's proposed preschool curriculum;

34 (4) a description of intended strategies to ensure the inclusion of
35 preschool children with disabilities in general education settings to
36 the maximum extent possible;

37 (5) a description of intended strategies to annually identify and
38 recruit families of at-risk pupils and other hard-to-reach
39 populations, and subsequently ensure these children receive priority
40 placement in the preschool program;

41 (6) a demonstration of due diligence to partner with all ready,
42 willing, and able licensed child care providers and Head Start
43 programs in the district's immediate and neighboring communities;

44 (7) an analysis of community need and the potential impact of a
45 mixed delivery model of preschool education in a format
46 determined by the commissioner or, if the applicant does not
47 propose a mixed delivery model, justification for the decision not to
48 do so, which justification shall include evidence that the district has

- 1 adequate facility and staffing resources to implement high-quality
2 preschool education without a mixed delivery model; and
- 3 (8) a description of the strategies the district has in place for
4 serving eligible preschool students, with a five-year plan to serve 90
5 percent of the district's universe of three- and four-year olds.
- 6 b. In determining preschool expansion grant amounts and
7 recipients, the commissioner shall give preference to districts in
8 accordance with the concentration of at-risk pupils, as defined in
9 section 3 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-45). Preference given
10 pursuant to this subsection shall ensure that, all other application
11 criteria being equal, applicants with higher concentrations of at-risk
12 students receive funding priority. The commissioner may prioritize
13 applicants representing a consortium of school districts agreeing to
14 make a high-quality preschool program available in all member
15 districts.
- 16 c. The Department of Education, the Department of Children and
17 Families, and the Department of Human Services shall maintain on
18 the departments' Internet websites a page that includes:
- 19 (1) a list of all districts receiving preschool expansion grants for
20 the school year;
- 21 (2) a list of all districts eligible to apply for preschool expansion
22 grants for the school year;
- 23 (3) a list of all licensed child care providers and Head Start
24 programs in each district's community, as well as in neighboring
25 communities; and
- 26 (4) the contact information for all district-operated preschool
27 programs, licensed child care providers, and Head Start programs.
- 28 d. The Department of Education, the Department of Children
29 and Families, and the Department of Human Services shall annually
30 update the information required pursuant to subsection c. of this
31 section no later than July 14 of each year.
- 32
- 33 7. (New section) a. A school district that receives preschool
34 education aid pursuant to section 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-
35 54) shall:
- 36 (1) demonstrate due diligence to partner with all ready, willing,
37 and able licensed child care providers and Head Start programs in
38 the immediate and neighboring communities; and
- 39 (2) submit to the Department of Education an annual program
40 plan detailing the status of the district's preschool program
41 implementation. The plan shall include information specified by the
42 commissioner, including but not limited to:
- 43 (a) the district's comprehensive curriculum;
- 44 (b) protocol for how students' families can access community
45 services, including services offered by licensed child care providers
46 and Head Start programs;

1 (c) a description of how the district conducts outreach to
2 families to determine individual family needs, advocate on their
3 behalf, and obtain appropriate community services; and

4 (d) a description of how the district identifies and recruits
5 families of at-risk pupils and other hard-to-reach populations, and
6 subsequently ensures these children receive priority placement in
7 the preschool program.

8 b. A school district that receives preschool education aid
9 pursuant to section 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54) shall
10 participate in a system of self-assessment for continuous quality
11 improvement approved by the Department of Education to inform
12 the school district of the status of its preschool program
13 implementation. The system shall identify program areas in need of
14 improvement based on a self-assessment, and shall include a
15 validation visit by a State team at least once every three years. The
16 department may, based on the results of a district's self-assessment
17 and the validation visit, require the district to complete an
18 improvement plan. The improvement plan shall include a detailed
19 explanation and timeline of the steps the district will take to
20 improve areas identified for improvement.

21
22 8. (New section) The Department of Education, the Department
23 of Children and Families, and the Department of Human Services
24 shall, in consultation with school districts, licensed child care
25 providers, Head Start program providers, and other stakeholders
26 identified by the Commissioner of Education, submit a report to the
27 Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1)
28 no later than March 1 next following the date of enactment of
29 P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill)
30 on the status of preschool education in the State and the efficacy of
31 the mixed delivery method of preschool education. The Department
32 of Education may utilize up to \$250,000 of any appropriation for
33 preschool education aid to contract temporary staff to assist with the
34 preparation of the report issued pursuant to this section.

35
36 9. (New section) a. There is established in the Department of
37 Education a Universal Preschool Implementation Steering
38 Committee. The members of the committee shall be as follows:

- 39 (1) the Commissioner of Education, or a designee;
40 (2) the Commissioner of Children and Families, or a designee;
41 (3) the Commissioner of Human Services, or a designee;
42 (4) the Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development, or
43 a designee;
44 (5) the Commissioner of Health, or a designee;
45 (6) the Chief Executive Officer of the New Jersey Economic
46 Development Authority, or a designee;
47 (7) one member appointed by the President of the Senate, who
48 shall be an employee of the Legislature; and

- 1 (8) one member appointed by the Speaker of the General
- 2 Assembly, who shall be an employee of the Legislature.
- 3 b. The duties of the committee shall be as follows:
- 4 (1) recommending to the Governor and Legislature a funding
- 5 methodology for preschool costs to be implemented for all school
- 6 districts beginning in the 2028-2029 school year, which may
- 7 include proposing a Preschool Adequacy Budget and preschool
- 8 education aid formula modeled after the calculation of equalization
- 9 aid pursuant to section 11 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-53);
- 10 (2) evaluating the pilot program established pursuant to
- 11 subsection h. of section 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54) for
- 12 school districts that first receive preschool education aid in the
- 13 2025-2026, 2026-2027, and 2027-2028 school years;
- 14 (3) proposing methods to incentivize school districts to pursue
- 15 mixed delivery partnerships with licensed child care providers and
- 16 Head Start programs;
- 17 (4) proposing optional methods for school districts to establish
- 18 centralized enrollment systems that prioritize family choice first in
- 19 determining a preschool student's placement setting;
- 20 (5) analyzing whether providing an adjustment to school
- 21 districts' tax levy growth limitation related to preschool costs is
- 22 necessary or beneficial to the State's preschool expansion efforts;
- 23 and
- 24 (6) recommending any appropriate means by which the State can
- 25 seek to strengthen and expand the preschool workforce.
- 26 c. The steering committee may convene one or more local
- 27 subcommittees to solicit input from local practitioners to facilitate
- 28 completion of the requirements set forth in subsection b. of this
- 29 section.
- 30 d. The steering committee shall organize within 90 days of the
- 31 effective date of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature
- 32 as this bill).
- 33
- 34 10. (New section) The Department of Education, in consultation
- 35 with the Department of Children and Families, shall develop and
- 36 periodically update a Mixed Delivery Model Preschool Handbook
- 37 to compile all State requirements and associated guidance
- 38 documents, organized by topic, deemed relevant by the
- 39 Commissioner of Education. The topics addressed in the handbook
- 40 shall include, but not be limited to:
- 41 a. funding and staffing requirements;
- 42 b. school district and licensed child care provider program
- 43 administration;
- 44 c. eligibility, recruitment, and enrollment;
- 45 d. family engagement;
- 46 e. curriculum;
- 47 f. child assessments;
- 48 g. classroom assessments and program evaluation;

1 h. optional strategies for school districts to establish centralized
2 enrollment systems that prioritize family choice first in determining
3 a preschool student's placement setting; and

4 i. strategies for supporting contracted licensed child care
5 providers in maintaining access to infant and toddler care.
6

7 11. (New section) In order to strengthen and expand the
8 preschool workforce, the Secretary of Higher Education shall
9 develop guidance encouraging two- and four-year public
10 institutions of higher education to enter into joint dual degree
11 admission agreements that require all credits earned toward Early
12 Childhood Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degrees to be
13 fully transferable and applicable to course requirements for
14 educator preparation programs at four-year institutions of higher
15 education.
16

17 12. (New section) The Department of Children and Families, in
18 consultation with the Department of Human Services and
19 Department of Education, shall develop guidance for licensed child
20 care providers to establish graduated salary scales for private
21 teachers working toward preschool certification. The guidance
22 shall encourage the development of salary scales that provide salary
23 increases for increased academic preparation, including the
24 completion of a Child Development Associate credential, the
25 attainment of credits toward degree completion, the award of a
26 bachelor's degree in early childhood education, and the receipt of
27 an early childhood teacher certification.
28

29 13. N.J.S.18A:44-2 is amended to read as follows:

30 18A:44-2. a. The board of education of [any] a district [may]
31 serving elementary grades shall establish a kindergarten school or
32 kindergarten department, which in order to receive State aid shall
33 be a one-year program in advance of or in preparation for entrance
34 to first grade, in any school under its control, and [may admit to
35 such kindergarten school or department any child over the age of
36 four and under the age of five and] shall admit to [such] the
37 kindergarten school or department any child over the age of five
38 and under the age of six years as of October 1 of that school year
39 who is a resident of the district , but a board of education may, in its
40 discretion, admit any student who turns five after this date if they
41 meet entrance requirements as may be established by the rules and
42 regulations of the board through a board approved policy.

43 b. A kindergarten school or kindergarten department established
44 by a board of education shall provide a full-day kindergarten
45 program no later than the beginning of the 2029-2030 school year;
46 provided, however, that a district not providing a full-day
47 kindergarten program prior to the effective date of

1 P.L. , c. (pending before the Legislature as this bill) may satisfy
 2 the requirements of this subsection by entering a sending-receiving
 3 relationship with a kindergarten school or kindergarten department
 4 established by the board of education of an adjacent school district.
 5 The tuition of students attending a kindergarten school or
 6 kindergarten department in another district in accordance with a
 7 sending-receive agreement shall be determined in accordance with
 8 N.J.S.18A:38-19. Attendance at a kindergarten school or
 9 kindergarten department shall be free in accordance with the
 10 requirements of N.J.S.18A:38-1.

11 (cf: P.L.1996, c.138, s.72)

12
 13 14. Section 8 of P.L.2000, c.72 (C.18A:7G-8) is amended to read
 14 as follows:

15 8. a. The number of unhoused students shall be calculated as the
 16 number of FTE students who are projected to be enrolled in
 17 **【preschool for children with disabilities, preschool,】** kindergarten,
 18 grades 1 through 12, and special education services pupil
 19 educational programs provided in a district within five years, which
 20 are in excess of the functional capacity of the district's current
 21 school facilities or the functional capacity of the school facilities
 22 which will be available within five years other than the school
 23 facilities for which the preliminary eligible costs are determined,
 24 based upon the district's long-range facilities plan. The
 25 determination of unhoused capacity shall separately consider
 26 projected enrollments and functional capacities at the **【early**
 27 **childhood and】** elementary (**【preschool】** kindergarten through
 28 grade 5), middle (grades 6 through 8), and high school (grades 9
 29 through 12) levels. For the purpose of calculating the district's
 30 unhoused students, special education services students shall be
 31 considered part of the grade level to which the students'
 32 chronological age corresponds. In the event that the commissioner
 33 approves a school facilities project which involves the construction
 34 of a new school facility to replace an existing school facility, which
 35 shall accommodate both the unhoused students and the students in
 36 the existing school facility, the calculation of the number of
 37 unhoused students shall include the number of students currently
 38 attending the existing facility which is to be replaced.

39 b. Approved area for unhoused students (AU) shall be
 40 determined according to the following formula:

41
$$AU = \mathbf{【(UEC \times SEC) +】} (UE \times SE) + (UM \times SM) + (UH \times SH)$$

 42 where

43 **【UEC,】** UE, UM, UH are the numbers of unhoused students in
 44 the **【early childhood,】** elementary, middle, and high school
 45 enrollment categories, respectively; and

46 **【SEC,】** SE, SM, SH are the area allowances per FTE student in
 47 **【preschool and】** kindergarten **【, grades 1】** through grade 5, grades

1 6 through 8, and grades 9 through 12, respectively. Area allowances
2 shall be determined based on the grade level of a student regardless
3 of the grade configurations used in the school buildings of the
4 district.

5 The minimum area allowance per FTE student shall be as
6 follows:

7 【Preschool】 <u>Kindergarten</u> through grade 5	125 sq. ft.
8 Grades 6 through 8	134 sq. ft.
9 Grades 9 through 12	151 sq. ft.

10 The commissioner, in consultation with the State Treasurer and
11 the Commissioner of Community Affairs, shall adopt regulations
12 that establish a process for the consideration of special
13 circumstances, in addition to those provided in section 5 of
14 P.L.2010, c.72 (C.18A:7G-5), in which the area allowances per FTE
15 student established pursuant to this subsection may be adjusted.
16 Any decision made by the commissioner pursuant to those
17 regulations shall be made in consultation with the State Treasurer
18 and the Commissioner of Community Affairs.

19 (cf: P.L.2017, c.131, s.18)

20
21 15. (New section) The Commissioner of Education shall adopt,
22 pursuant to the “Administrative Procedure Act,” P.L.1968, c.410
23 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), rules and regulations necessary to effectuate
24 the provisions of this act.

25
26 16. This act shall take effect immediately
27
28

29 STATEMENT

30
31 This bill is to be known as the “New Jersey Universal Preschool
32 and Kindergarten Act.”

33 The bill modifies various statutes governing early childhood
34 education in an effort to codify and expand on requirements that the
35 Department of Education has previously established for providing
36 State-funded preschool to build and sustain universal access to high-
37 quality programs.

38 *Preschool Expansion Grants*

39
40
41 The bill requires the Department of Education (DOE) to provide
42 annual preschool expansion grants, defined as grants expanding free
43 access to high-quality preschool for resident three- and four-year
44 children in in districts that do not, at the time of application for a grant,
45 provide State-funded, high-quality, free preschool programs. Under
46 the bill, the Department’s preschool expansion grant program must
47 include certain requirements.

1 *Preschool Education Aid*

2

3 The bill also revises requirements for preschool education aid. The
4 revisions include an update to the formula for determining each
5 district's allocation of preschool education aid to eliminate the use of
6 District Factor Groups and specify the use of projected FTE
7 enrollment for the upcoming year. The bill also requires districts that
8 receive preschool education aid to meet certain criteria concerning
9 partnerships with licensed child care providers and Head Start
10 programs, program planning, and self-assessment.

11

12 *Preschool Cost-Sharing Pilot Program*

13

14 The bill establishes a three-year pilot program for a methodology
15 for sharing preschool education costs between the State and
16 participating school districts. A participating district is any district
17 receiving preschool education aid for the first time in 2025-2026,
18 2026-2027, or 2027-2028 school years. Under the pilot program, for
19 participating school districts, preschool education aid is to be
20 calculated by multiplying the district's district aid percentage by the
21 amount calculated under the preschool education aid formula
22 applicable to districts that received preschool education aid in the
23 2024-2025 school year. District aid percentage for this purpose is to
24 equal to the greater of the district aid percentage as defined pursuant to
25 section 3 of P.L.2000, c.72 (C.18A:7G-3) or 40 percent.

26

27 *Universal Preschool Implementation Steering Committee*

28

29 The bill establishes in the Department of Education a Universal
30 Preschool Implementation Steering Committee composed of
31 representatives of various State agencies and the New Jersey
32 Legislature.

33

34 *Other Early Childhood Education Provisions*

35

36 The bill also:

- 37 • requires the DOE, Department of Children and Families, and
38 Department of Human Services to maintain and annually
39 update certain information regarding preschool and child care
40 providers on their respective internet websites;
41 • requires these departments, in consultation with stakeholders,
42 submit a report to the Legislature on the status of preschool
43 education in the State and the efficacy of the mixed delivery
44 method of preschool education;
45 • requires numerous State agencies to publish guidance on a
46 variety of topics related to expanding access to high-quality
47 preschool education in areas of greatest need; and

- 1 • removes preschool students from the population used to
2 determine approved area for unhoused students for purposes of
3 the DOE’s administration of school facilities projects.

4 Finally, the bill requires each elementary-serving school district in
5 the State to establish a full-day kindergarten program no later than the
6 beginning of the 2029-2030 school year. Attendance at the
7 kindergarten program shall be free. School districts not providing full-
8 day kindergarten by the effective date of this bill may satisfy this
9 requirement by entering a sending-receiving relationship with an
10 adjacent school district.

[First Reprint]

ASSEMBLY, No. 5717

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
221st LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MAY 22, 2025

Sponsored by:

Assemblywoman ANDREA KATZ

District 8 (Atlantic and Burlington)

Co-Sponsored by:

Assemblywoman Haider

SYNOPSIS

Makes various changes to provision of preschool aid and facilities requirements; establishes Universal Preschool Implementation Steering Committee; requires full-day kindergarten in all school districts.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As reported by the Assembly Education Committee on June 16, 2025, with amendments.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 6/19/2025)

1 AN ACT concerning early childhood education, amending various
 2 parts of the statutory law, and supplementing P.L.2007, c.260
 3 ¹and chapters 26 and 44 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes¹.
 4

5 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
 6 of New Jersey:
 7

8 1. (New section) Sections 1 and 2 ¹**[,]** and¹ 6 through ¹**[12, and**
 9 **15]** 11¹ of this act shall be known and may be cited as the “New
 10 Jersey Universal Preschool and Kindergarten Act.”
 11

12 2. (New section) The Legislature finds and declares that:

13 a. Research is clear that high-quality preschool can change the
 14 educational trajectories of young children, particularly
 15 economically disadvantaged children and multilingual learners.
 16 Improvements in literacy, numeracy, social-emotional and self-
 17 regulatory development, and lifetime earnings have been
 18 demonstrated among individuals who attend high-quality preschool
 19 compared to their peers.

20 b. New Jersey leads the nation in expanding access to high-
 21 quality preschool opportunities. The State has achieved a unique
 22 and world-class combination of significant financial investment and
 23 rigorous quality standards. New Jersey State-funded preschools are
 24 required to serve three- and four-year olds in full-day programs
 25 featuring small class sizes led by quality instructors with ample
 26 curriculum support, professional development, and accommodations
 27 for students with special needs. New Jersey’s State spending on
 28 preschool is among the highest in the country, with clear,
 29 significant impacts on our public school system: tens of thousands
 30 of three- and four-year olds in hundreds of communities around the
 31 State attend transformative high-quality early education programs.

32 c. District-operated preschool programs, licensed childcare
 33 centers, and Head Start programs form an interrelated and
 34 interdependent early childhood ecosystem. Each component is made
 35 stronger by the other, and the system is greater and more impactful
 36 than the sum of its parts. No component can reach its full potential
 37 without the facilities, staff, resources, and expertise of the others.
 38 Together, the system represents a continuum of education and care
 39 services from birth through age five necessary not only for children
 40 to realize their full life potential, but for families to participate fully
 41 in economic and civic society. To lift up this system is a moral and
 42 economic imperative.

43 d. To build on the State’s preschool expansion progress to date
 44 and to realize the full benefits of high-quality preschool, it is fitting

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets **[thus]** in the above bill is
 not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

Matter enclosed in superscript numerals has been adopted as follows:

¹Assembly AED committee amendments adopted June 16, 2025.

1 and proper for the State to enshrine certain policies and values in
2 State law, including:

3 (1) providing sustainable, annual financial support for
4 expanding access to high-quality preschool;

5 (2) codifying preschool education aid provisions previously
6 implemented through language in various annual appropriations
7 acts and harmonizing New Jersey law accordingly;

8 (3) prioritizing expansion for economically disadvantaged
9 families and communities;

10 (4) requiring State-funded preschool programs to make every
11 effort to partner with local ready, willing, and able licensed
12 childcare providers and Head Start programs; and

13 (5) conducting ongoing evaluations of the State's approach to
14 early childhood and preschool education to ensure that policy
15 continues to reflect stakeholder expertise and evolving research.

16 e. In addition to high-quality preschool education, full-day
17 kindergarten is necessary not only to unlock a child's full learning
18 potential, but to facilitate a smooth transition from high-quality
19 preschool into elementary programs.

20

21 3. Section 3 of P.L.2007, c.62 (C.18A:7F-38) is amended to read
22 as follows:

23 3. a. Notwithstanding the provisions of any other law to the
24 contrary, a school district shall not adopt a budget pursuant to
25 sections 5 and 6 of P.L.1996, c.138 (C.18A:7F-5 and 18A:7F-6)
26 with an increase in its adjusted tax levy that exceeds, except as
27 provided in subsection e. of section 4 of P.L.2007, c.62 (C.18A:7F-
28 39), the tax levy growth limitation calculated as follows: the sum of
29 the prebudget year adjusted tax levy and the adjustment for
30 increases in enrollment multiplied by 2.0 percent, and adjustments
31 for an increase in health care costs, increases in amounts for certain
32 normal and accrued liability pension contributions set forth in
33 sections 1 and 2 of P.L.2009, c.19 amending section 24 of
34 P.L.1954, c.84 (C.43:15A-24) and section 15 of P.L.1944, c.255
35 (C.43:16A-15) for the year set forth in those sections, **[and,]** in the
36 case of an SDA district as defined pursuant to section 3 of
37 P.L.2000, c.72 (C.18A:7G-3), during the 2018-2019 through the
38 2024-2025 school years, increases to raise a general fund tax levy to
39 an amount that does not exceed its local share , and, in the case of a
40 school district first receiving preschool education aid in the 2025-
41 2026, 2026-2027, or 2027-2028 school years and participating in
42 the pilot program established by the commissioner pursuant to
43 subsection h. of 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54), increases to
44 raise a general fund tax levy for the local share of preschool
45 education costs.

46 b. (1) The allowable adjustment for increases in enrollment
47 authorized pursuant to subsection a. of this section shall equal the

1 per pupil prebudget year adjusted tax levy multiplied by EP, where
2 EP equals the sum of:

3 (a) 0.50 for each unit of weighted resident enrollment that
4 constitutes an increase from the prebudget year over 1%, but not
5 more than 2.5%;

6 (b) 0.75 for each unit of weighted resident enrollment that
7 constitutes an increase from the prebudget year over 2.5%, but not
8 more than 4%; and

9 (c) 1.00 for each unit of weighted resident enrollment that
10 constitutes an increase from the prebudget year over 4%.

11 (2) A school district may request approval from the
12 commissioner to calculate EP equal to 1.00 for any increase in
13 weighted resident enrollment if it can demonstrate that the
14 calculation pursuant to paragraph (1) of this subsection would result
15 in an average class size that exceeds 10% above the facilities
16 efficiency standards established pursuant to P.L.2000, c.72
17 (C.18A:7G-1 et al.).

18 c. (Deleted by amendment, P.L.2010, c.44)

19 d. (1) The allowable adjustment for increases in health care costs
20 authorized pursuant to subsection a. of this section shall equal that
21 portion of the actual increase in total health care costs for the
22 budget year, less any withdrawals from the current expense
23 emergency reserve account for increases in total health care costs,
24 that exceeds 2.0 percent of the total health care costs in the
25 prebudget year, but that is not in excess of the product of the total
26 health care costs in the prebudget year multiplied by the average
27 percentage increase of the State Health Benefits Program, P.L.1961,
28 c.49 (C.52:14-17.25 et seq.), as annually determined by the
29 Division of Pensions and Benefits in the Department of the
30 Treasury.

31 (2) The allowable adjustment for increases in the amount of
32 normal and accrued liability pension contributions authorized
33 pursuant to subsection a. of this section shall equal that portion of
34 the actual increase in total normal and accrued liability pension
35 contributions for the budget year that exceeds 2.0 percent of the
36 total normal and accrued liability pension contributions in the
37 prebudget year.

38 (3) In the case of an SDA district, as defined pursuant to section
39 3 of P.L.2000, c.72 (C.18A:7G-3), in which the prebudget year
40 adjusted tax levy is less than the school district's prebudget year
41 local share as calculated pursuant to section 10 of P.L.2007, c.260
42 (C.18A:7F-52), the allowable adjustment for increases to raise a tax
43 levy that does not exceed the school district's local share shall equal
44 the difference between the prebudget year adjusted tax levy and the
45 prebudget year local share.

46 (4) In the case of a school district first receiving preschool
47 education aid in the 2025-2026, 2026-2027, or 2027-2028 school
48 years and participating in the pilot program established by the

1 commissioner pursuant to subsection h. of 12 of P.L.2007, c.260
2 (C.18A:7F-54), the allowable adjustment for increases to raise a
3 general fund tax levy for the local share of preschool education
4 costs shall be equal to the actual increase required to provide
5 preschool education under the pilot program less State aid provided
6 pursuant to subsection h. of 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54).

7 A school district first receiving preschool education aid in the
8 2025-2026 school year and participating in the pilot program
9 established by the commissioner pursuant to subsection h. of 12 of
10 P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54) may, prior to the delivery of tax
11 bills pursuant to R.S.54:4-64, recertify to the county board of
12 taxation the sum to be raised in the district during the ensuing
13 school year if the change in the amount to be raised is equal to the
14 district's local share of preschool education costs for that school
15 year.

16 e. (Deleted by amendment, P.L.2010, c.44)

17 f. The adjusted tax levy shall be increased or decreased
18 accordingly whenever the responsibility and associated cost of a
19 school district activity is transferred to another school district or
20 governmental entity.

21 (cf: P.L.2018, c.67, s.6)

22
23 4. Section 3 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-45) is amended to
24 read as follows:

25 3. As used in **【this act】** P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-43 et al.)
26 and P.L.1996, c.138 (C.18A:7F-1 et al.), unless the context clearly
27 requires a different meaning:

28 "At-risk pupils" means those resident pupils from households
29 with a household income at or below the most recent federal
30 poverty guidelines available on October 15 of the prebudget year
31 multiplied by 1.85;

32 "Base per pupil amount" means the cost per elementary pupil of
33 delivering the core curriculum content standards and extracurricular
34 and cocurricular activities necessary for a thorough and efficient
35 education;

36 "Bilingual education pupil" means a resident pupil enrolled in a
37 program of bilingual education or in an English as a second
38 language program approved by the State Board of Education;

39 "Budgeted local share" means the district's local tax levy
40 contained in the budget certified for taxation purposes;

41 "Capital outlay" means capital outlay as defined in GAAP;

42 "Combination pupil" means a resident pupil who is both an at-
43 risk pupil and a bilingual education pupil;

44 "Commissioner" means the Commissioner of Education;

45 "Concentration of at-risk pupils" shall be based on prebudget
46 year pupil data and means, for a school district or a county
47 vocational school district, the number of at-risk pupils among those
48 counted in resident enrollment, divided by resident enrollment;

1 "County special services school district" means any entity
2 established pursuant to article 8 of chapter 46 of Title 18A of the
3 New Jersey Statutes;

4 "County vocational school district" means any entity established
5 pursuant to article 3 of chapter 54 of Title 18A of the New Jersey
6 Statutes;

7 "CPI" means the increase, expressed as a decimal, in the average
8 annualized consumer price index for the New York City and
9 Philadelphia areas in the fiscal year preceding the prebudget year
10 relative to the previous fiscal year as reported by the United States
11 Department of Labor;

12 "Debt service" means payments of principal and interest upon
13 school bonds and other obligations issued to finance the purchase or
14 construction of school facilities, additions to school facilities, or the
15 reconstruction, remodeling, alteration, modernization, renovation or
16 repair of school facilities, including furnishings, equipment,
17 architect fees, and the costs of issuance of such obligations and
18 shall include payments of principal and interest upon bonds
19 heretofore issued to fund or refund such obligations, and upon
20 municipal bonds and other obligations which the commissioner
21 approves as having been issued for such purposes;

22 "District income" means the aggregate income of the residents of
23 the taxing district or taxing districts, based upon data provided by
24 the Division of Taxation in the New Jersey Department of the
25 Treasury and contained on the New Jersey State Income Tax forms
26 for the calendar year ending two years prior to the prebudget year.
27 The commissioner may supplement data contained on the State
28 Income Tax forms with data available from other State or federal
29 agencies in order to better correlate the data to that collected on the
30 federal census. With respect to regional districts and their
31 constituent districts, however, the district income as described
32 above shall be allocated among the regional and constituent districts
33 in proportion to the number of pupils resident in each of them;

34 "Equalized valuation" means the equalized valuation of the
35 taxing district or taxing districts, as certified by the Director of the
36 Division of Taxation on October 1, or subsequently revised by the
37 tax court by January 15, of the prebudget year. With respect to
38 regional districts and their constituent districts, however, the
39 equalized valuations as described above shall be allocated among
40 the regional and constituent districts in proportion to the number of
41 pupils resident in each of them. In the event that the equalized table
42 certified by the director shall be revised by the tax court after
43 January 15 of the prebudget year, the revised valuations shall be
44 used in the recomputation of aid for an individual school district
45 filing an appeal, but shall have no effect upon the calculation of the
46 property value rate, Statewide average equalized school tax rate, or
47 Statewide equalized total tax rate;

1 "Full-day preschool" means a preschool day consisting of a
2 minimum six-hour comprehensive educational program in
3 accordance with the district's kindergarten through grade 12 school
4 calendar;

5 "GAAP" means the generally accepted accounting principles
6 established by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board as
7 prescribed by the State board pursuant to N.J.S.18A:4-14;

8 "General special education services pupil" means a pupil
9 receiving specific services pursuant to chapter 46 of Title 18A of
10 the New Jersey Statutes;

11 "Geographic cost adjustment" means an adjustment that reflects
12 county differences in the cost of providing educational services that
13 are outside the control of the district;

14 "Household income" means income as defined in 7 CFR ss.245.2
15 and 245.6 or any subsequent superseding federal law or regulation;

16 "Net budget" means the sum of the district's general fund tax
17 levy, State aid received pursuant to the provisions of this act other
18 than preschool education aid, miscellaneous revenue estimated
19 pursuant to GAAP, and designated general fund balance;

20 **["Prebudget year" means the school fiscal year preceding the**
21 **year in which the school budget is implemented;]**

22 "Nonpreschool ECPA" means the amount of early childhood
23 program aid, excluding prior year carry-forward amounts, included
24 in a district's 2007-2008 school year budget certified for taxes that
25 was allocated to grades K through 3;

26 "Prebudget year" means the school fiscal year preceding the year
27 in which the school budget is implemented;

28 "Preschool expansion grant" means any grant funded by a
29 portion of preschool education aid allocated by the Commissioner
30 of Education or any other State funds appropriated for the purpose
31 of expanding free access to high-quality preschool for resident
32 three- and four-year old children in districts that do not, at the time
33 of application for a grant, provide State-funded, high-quality, free
34 preschool programs;

35 "Report" means the Educational Adequacy Report issued by the
36 commissioner pursuant to section 4 of this act;

37 "Resident enrollment" means the number of pupils other than
38 preschool pupils, post-graduate pupils, and post-secondary
39 vocational pupils who, on the last school day prior to October 16 of
40 the current school year, are residents of the district and are enrolled
41 in: (1) the public schools of the district, excluding evening schools,
42 (2) another school district, other than a county vocational school
43 district in the same county on a full-time basis, or a State college
44 demonstration school or private school to which the district of
45 residence pays tuition, or (3) a State facility in which they are
46 placed by the district; or are residents of the district and are: (1)
47 receiving home instruction, or (2) in a shared-time vocational

1 program and are regularly attending a school in the district and a
2 county vocational school district. In addition, resident enrollment
3 shall include the number of pupils who, on the last school day prior
4 to October 16 of the prebudget year, are residents of the district and
5 in a State facility in which they were placed by the State. Pupils in
6 a shared-time vocational program shall be counted on an equated
7 full-time basis in accordance with procedures to be established by
8 the commissioner. Resident enrollment shall include regardless of
9 nonresidence, the enrolled children of teaching staff members of the
10 school district or county vocational school district who are
11 permitted, by contract or local district policy, to enroll their
12 children in the educational program of the school district or county
13 vocational school district without payment of tuition. Disabled
14 children between three and five years of age and receiving programs
15 and services pursuant to N.J.S.18A:46-6 shall be included in the
16 resident enrollment of the district;

17 "School district" means any local or regional school district
18 established pursuant to chapter 8 or chapter 13 of Title 18A of the
19 New Jersey Statutes;

20 "State facility" means a State developmental center, a State
21 Division of Youth and Family Services' residential center, a State
22 residential mental health center, a Department of Children and
23 Families Regional Day School, a State training school/secure care
24 facility, a State juvenile community program, a juvenile detention
25 center or a boot camp under the supervisory authority of the
26 Youth Justice Commission pursuant to P.L.1995, c.284 (C.52:17B-
27 169 et seq.), or an institution operated by or under contract with the
28 Department of Corrections, Children and Families or Human
29 Services, or the Youth Justice Commission;

30 "Statewide equalized school tax rate" means the amount
31 calculated by dividing the general fund tax levy for all school
32 districts, which excludes county vocational school districts and
33 county special services school districts as defined pursuant to this
34 section, in the State for the prebudget year by the equalized
35 valuations certified in the year prior to the prebudget year of all
36 taxing districts in the State except taxing districts for which there
37 are not school tax levies;

38 "Tax levy growth limitation" means the permitted annual
39 increase in the adjusted tax levy for a school district as calculated
40 pursuant to sections 3 and 4 of P.L.2007, c.62 (C.18A:7F-38 and
41 18A:7F-39).

42 (cf: P.L.2025, c.35, s.37)

43

44 5. Section 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54) is amended to
45 read as follows:

46 12. a. **■**District factor group A and B school districts, and district
47 factor group CD school districts with a concentration of at-risk
48 pupils equal to or greater than 40%, shall provide free access to

1 full-day preschool for all three- and four-year old pupils. All other
 2 school districts shall provide free access to full-day preschool for
 3 at-risk pupils. Preschool education aid shall reflect the cost of the
 4 pupil's placement in either a district program, a licensed child care
 5 provider program, or a Head Start Program.】 (Deleted by
 6 amendment, P.L. , c.) (pending before the Legislature as this
 7 bill)

8 (1) **【Preschool】** In the case of a school district that received
 9 preschool education aid in the 2024-2025 school year, preschool
 10 education aid shall be calculated **【for district factor group A and B**
 11 school districts, and for district factor group CD school districts
 12 with a concentration of at-risk pupils equal to or greater than 40%,**】**
 13 as follows:

14
$$\text{Aid} = (\text{IDE} \times \text{IDA}) + (\text{PRE} \times \text{PRA}) + (\text{HSE} \times \text{HSA})$$

15 where

16 IDE is the **【number】** projected FTE enrollment for the upcoming
 17 school year of district pupils, other than preschool disabled pupils,
 18 in an in-district preschool program;

19 IDA is the per pupil aid amount for an in-district preschool
 20 program;

21 PRE is the **【number】** projected FTE enrollment for the upcoming
 22 school year of district pupils, other than preschool disabled pupils,
 23 in a preschool program operated by a licensed child care provider;

24 PRA is the per pupil aid amount for a preschool program
 25 operated by a licensed child care provider;

26 HSE is the **【number】** projected FTE enrollment for the
 27 upcoming school year of district pupils, other than preschool
 28 disabled pupils, in a Head Start Program; and

29 HSA is the per pupil aid amount for a Head Start Program.

30 **【A CD school district with a concentration of at-risk pupils equal to**
 31 **or greater than 40% shall be eligible to receive preschool education**
 32 **aid pursuant to the provisions of this paragraph for a minimum of**
 33 **three school years from the time of initial determination of**
 34 **eligibility even if the district's concentration of at-risk pupils falls**
 35 **below a 40% concentration of at-risk pupils. In the event that the**
 36 **district falls below a 40% concentration of at-risk pupils for two**
 37 **consecutive school years, in the third school year the district shall**
 38 **receive preschool education aid for each at-risk pupil and for any**
 39 **four-year old pupil for whom the district received preschool**
 40 **education aid in the prior school year, and that pupil shall receive**
 41 **free preschool education.】**

42 (2) **【Preschool education aid shall be calculated for all other**
 43 **districts as follows:**

44
$$\text{Aid} = (\text{ARID} \times \text{IDA}) + (\text{ARP} \times \text{PRA}) + (\text{ARHS} \times \text{HSA})$$

45 where

46 ARID is the number of at-risk district pupils, other than
 47 preschool disabled pupils, in an in-district preschool program;

1 IDA is the per pupil aid amount for an in-district preschool
2 program;

3 ARP is the number of at-risk district pupils, other than preschool
4 disabled pupils, in a preschool program operated by a licensed child
5 care provider;

6 PRA is the per pupil aid amount for a preschool program
7 operated by a licensed child care provider;

8 ARHS is the number of at-risk district pupils, other than
9 preschool disabled pupils, in a Head Start Program; and

10 HSA is the per pupil aid amount for a Head Start Program. **】**
11 (Deleted by amendment, P.L. _____, c. _____) (pending before the
12 Legislature as this bill)

13 b. **【**In accordance with regulations adopted by the
14 commissioner, all districts shall submit a five-year plan that
15 provides for the full implementation of full-day preschool for all
16 eligible three- and four-year olds by the 2013-2014 school year. For
17 the purposes of this section, "full implementation" means serving
18 90% of eligible pupils in accordance with the preschool quality
19 standards adopted by the commissioner or such greater percentage
20 as determined by the commissioner. A school district shall annually
21 update the five-year plan based on actual implementation
22 experience and shall revise its pupil projections in accordance with
23 that experience. **】** (Deleted by amendment, P.L. _____, c. _____) (pending
24 before the Legislature as this bill)

25 c. (1) **【**In the case of a school district that did not receive any
26 form of preschool aid in the 2007-2008 school year, the 2008-2009
27 school year shall be a preschool planning year. Beginning in the
28 2009-2010 school year, the school district shall receive preschool
29 education aid calculated in accordance with the provisions of
30 subsection a. of this section based upon projected preschool
31 enrollment.

32 In the 2009-2010 school year the school district may also receive
33 start-up funds in accordance with regulations adopted by the
34 commissioner. **】** (Deleted by amendment, P.L. _____, c. _____) (pending
35 before the Legislature as this bill)

36 (2) In the case of a school district that received Early Launch to
37 Learning Initiative aid in the 2007-2008 school year, **【**for the 2008-
38 2009 school year the district shall receive preschool education aid
39 in an amount equal to the district's allocation of Early Launch to
40 Learning Initiative aid in the 2007-2008 school year. Beginning in
41 the 2009-2010 school year, **】** the school district shall receive
42 preschool education aid calculated in accordance with the
43 provisions of paragraph (1) of subsection a. of this section **【**based
44 upon projected preschool enrollment.

45 In the 2009-2010 school year the school district may also receive
46 start-up funds in accordance with regulations adopted by the
47 commissioner **】** pending a determination by the commissioner that

1 the district is prepared to meet all program requirements for high-
2 quality preschool pursuant to regulations adopted by the
3 commissioner.

4 (3) In the case of a school district that received early childhood
5 program aid in the 2007-2008 school year but did not receive
6 preschool expansion aid or education opportunity aid in that year,
7 **【**for the 2008-2009 school year the district shall receive preschool
8 education aid equal to the greater of the district's 2007-2008 amount
9 of early childhood program aid for preschool or the district's 2007-
10 2008 per pupil allocation of early childhood program aid as
11 included in the district's original 2007-2008 budget certified for
12 taxes, inflated by the CPI, and multiplied by the district's projected
13 preschool enrollment; except that if the district is able to
14 demonstrate in the five-year plan submitted to the commissioner
15 that it has the capacity to offer a full-day three- or four-year-old
16 program, or a full-day three- and four-year-old program, in the
17 2008-2009 school year, the commissioner may approve the funding
18 of the full-day program calculated in accordance with the provisions
19 of subsection a. of this section based upon projected preschool
20 enrollment. The district shall be informed of the commissioner's
21 determination upon approval of the five-year plan. Beginning in the
22 2009-2010 school year,**】** the school district shall receive preschool
23 education aid calculated in accordance with the provisions of
24 paragraph (1) of subsection a. of this section **【**based upon projected
25 preschool enrollment.

26 In the 2009-2010 school year the school district may also receive
27 start-up funds in accordance with regulations adopted by the
28 commissioner**】** pending a determination by the commissioner that
29 the district is prepared to meet all program requirements for high-
30 quality preschool pursuant to regulations adopted by the
31 commissioner.

32 (4) **【**In the case of a school district that received preschool
33 expansion aid or education opportunity aid in the 2007-2008 school
34 year, for the 2008-2009 school year the district shall receive
35 preschool education aid in an amount equal to the preschool budget
36 approved by the commissioner for the 2008-2009 school year.
37 Preschool education aid for the 2008-2009 school year shall be
38 adjusted following receipt of the Application for State School Aid
39 in October 2008. Beginning in the 2009-2010 school year, the
40 school district shall receive preschool education aid calculated in
41 accordance with the provisions of subsection a. of this section based
42 upon projected preschool enrollment; except that for any school
43 year the district shall not receive preschool aid in an amount less
44 than either the total amount of preschool aid the district received in
45 the 2008-2009 school year after the State aid adjustment or the
46 district's 2008-2009 school year preschool per pupil aid amount

1 multiplied by the projected number of preschool pupils after the
2 State aid adjustment, whichever is greater.

3 In the 2009-2010 school year the school district may also receive
4 start-up funds in accordance with regulations adopted by the
5 commissioner.】 (Deleted by amendment, P.L. ____, c. ____) (pending
6 before the Legislature as this bill)

7 d. For the 2008-2009 school year, the preschool per pupil aid
8 amounts shall be \$11,506 for pupils enrolled in an in-district
9 program, \$12,934 for pupils enrolled in a licensed child care
10 provider program, and \$7,146 for pupils enrolled in a Head Start
11 Program. The preschool per pupil aid amounts shall be adjusted by
12 the CPI in the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school years as required
13 pursuant to subsection b. of section 4 of this act. For subsequent
14 school years, the preschool per pupil aid amounts shall be
15 established in the Educational Adequacy Report, with the amounts
16 adjusted by the CPI for each of the two school years following the
17 first school year to which the report is applicable.

18 e. A district shall appropriate preschool education aid in a
19 special revenue fund for expenditure. In the event that any
20 preschool education aid is not expended during the budget year, the
21 aid may be carried forward in accordance with regulations adopted
22 by the commissioner.

23 f. In the event that a district has fully implemented a full-day
24 preschool program for three- and four-year old pupils 【in
25 accordance with its five-year plan】 and meets the preschool quality
26 standards or has provided preschool education to the number of
27 eligible students to be served during a school year in accordance
28 with 【that plan and its annual updates and】 the preschool quality
29 standards, the district may appropriate preschool education aid 【to
30 support kindergarten through grade 12 or to provide preschool
31 education for three- and four-year old pupils for whom the district
32 is not required to provide preschool education upon the approval of
33 the commissioner. The district shall request approval in its annual
34 plan update and any approval granted by the commissioner shall be
35 made during the annual school budget process】 for additional
36 purposes that may be designated by the commissioner, which
37 purposes shall include, but not be limited to, providing summer
38 programming for preschool students, professional development for
39 preschool staff, preschool facilities improvements, and
40 transportation services for preschool pupils.

41 g. A school district shall maintain the preschool quality
42 standards as adopted by the commissioner as a condition of receipt
43 of preschool education aid.

44 h. In the case of a school district that first receives preschool
45 education aid in the 2025-2026, 2026-2027, or 2027-2028 school
46 years, the aid shall be provided, within the limit of available
47 appropriations, pursuant to a three-year pilot program established

1 by the commissioner that includes a cost sharing methodology
2 between the State and the school district such that the amount of
3 preschool education aid allocated to the district shall be calculated
4 by multiplying the district aid percentage by the amount calculated
5 pursuant to the formula in paragraph (1) of subsection a. of this
6 section, where the district aid percentage shall be equal to the
7 greater of the district aid percentage as defined pursuant to section 3
8 of P.L.2000, c.72 (C.18A:7G-3) or 40 percent of eligible costs.

9 i. A school district receiving preschool education aid shall
10 obtain approval by the Commissioner of Education, in a manner
11 prescribed by the commissioner, prior to implementing any
12 significant redistribution, as defined by the commissioner, of State-
13 funded preschool seats among district-operated programs, licensed
14 child care providers, and Head Start programs.

15 (cf: P.L.2007, c.260, s.12)

16
17 6. (New section) a. The Department of Education shall, within the
18 limit of funds appropriated, annually provide at least one opportunity
19 to award preschool expansion grants in accordance with the provisions
20 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill).
21 A school district shall be eligible to apply for and receive a preschool
22 expansion grant if the district provides full-day kindergarten at the
23 time of application and meets any other criteria the Commissioner of
24 Education deems appropriate. An eligible school district shall submit
25 an application to the commissioner, in a manner and form determined
26 by the commissioner, which application shall include, but not be
27 limited to, the following:

28 (1) a general overview of the district's proposed preschool
29 program operational plan;

30 (2) enrollment projections for preschool students, other than
31 preschool students with disabilities, for the next five years;

32 (3) a description of the district's proposed preschool curriculum;

33 (4) a description of intended strategies to ensure the inclusion of
34 preschool children with disabilities in general education settings to the
35 maximum extent possible;

36 (5) a description of intended strategies to annually identify and
37 recruit families of at-risk pupils and other hard-to-reach populations,
38 and subsequently ensure these children receive priority placement in
39 the preschool program;

40 (6) a demonstration of due diligence to partner with all ready,
41 willing, and able licensed child care providers and Head Start
42 programs in the district's immediate and neighboring communities ¹,
43 which shall be made in a manner determined by the commissioner and
44 shall include, but not be limited to, documenting all efforts the
45 applicant made to engage with all licensed child care providers and
46 Head Start programs in the applicant's immediate and neighboring
47 communities¹;

1 (7) an analysis of community need and the potential impact of a
2 mixed delivery model of preschool education in a format determined
3 by the commissioner or, if the applicant does not propose a mixed
4 delivery model, justification for the decision not to do so, which
5 justification shall include evidence that the district has adequate
6 facility and staffing resources to implement high-quality preschool
7 education without a mixed delivery model; and

8 (8) a description of the strategies the district has in place for
9 serving eligible preschool students, with a five-year plan to serve 90
10 percent of the district's universe of three- and four-year olds.

11 b. In determining preschool expansion grant amounts and
12 recipients, the commissioner shall give preference to districts in
13 accordance with the concentration of at-risk pupils, as defined in
14 section 3 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-45). Preference given
15 pursuant to this subsection shall ensure that, all other application
16 criteria being equal, applicants with higher concentrations of at-risk
17 students receive funding priority. The commissioner may prioritize
18 applicants representing a consortium of school districts agreeing to
19 make a high-quality preschool program available in all member
20 districts.

21 c. The Department of Education, the Department of Children and
22 Families, and the Department of Human Services shall maintain on the
23 departments' Internet websites a page that includes:

24 (1) a list of all districts ¹**receiving preschool expansion grants**
25 offering State-funded preschool¹ for the school year;

26 (2) a list of all districts eligible to apply for preschool expansion
27 grants for the school year;

28 (3) a list of all licensed child care providers and Head Start
29 programs in each district's community, as well as in neighboring
30 communities; and

31 (4) the contact information for all district-operated preschool
32 programs, licensed child care providers, and Head Start programs.

33 d. The Department of Education, the Department of Children and
34 Families, and the Department of Human Services shall annually update
35 the information required pursuant to subsection c. of this section no
36 later than July 14 of each year. ¹The Department of Education, the
37 Department of Children and Families, and the Department of Human
38 Services shall update the information required pursuant to subsection
39 c. of this section in a timely manner after any preschool expansion
40 grants are awarded.¹

41
42 7. (New section) a. A school district that receives preschool
43 education aid pursuant to section 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-
44 54) shall:

45 (1) demonstrate due diligence to partner with all ready, willing,
46 and able licensed child care providers and Head Start programs in
47 the immediate and neighboring communities; and

(2) submit to the Department of Education an annual program plan detailing the status of the district's preschool program implementation. The plan shall include information specified by the commissioner, including but not limited to:

(a) the district's comprehensive curriculum;

(b) protocol for how students' families can access community services, including services offered by licensed child care providers and Head Start programs;

(c) a description of how the district conducts outreach to families to determine individual family needs, advocate on their behalf, and obtain appropriate community services; and

(d) a description of how the district identifies and recruits families of at-risk pupils and other hard-to-reach populations, and subsequently ensures these children receive priority placement in the preschool program.

b. A school district that receives preschool education aid pursuant to section 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54) shall participate in a system of self-assessment for continuous quality improvement approved by the Department of Education to inform the school district of the status of its preschool program implementation. The system shall identify program areas in need of improvement based on a self-assessment, and shall include a validation visit by a State team at least once every three years. The department may, based on the results of a district's self-assessment and the validation visit, require the district to complete an improvement plan. The improvement plan shall include a detailed explanation and timeline of the steps the district will take to improve areas identified for improvement.

8. (New section) The Department of Education, the Department of Children and Families, and the Department of Human Services shall, in consultation with school districts, licensed child care providers, Head Start program providers, and other stakeholders identified by the Commissioner of Education, submit a report to the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1) no later than March 1 next following the date of enactment of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill) 'and each March 1 annually thereafter'¹ on the status of preschool education in the State and the efficacy of the mixed delivery method of preschool education. The Department of Education may utilize up to \$250,000 of any appropriation for preschool education aid to contract temporary staff to assist with the preparation of the report issued pursuant to this section.

9. (New section) a. There is established in the Department of Education a Universal Preschool Implementation Steering Committee. The members of the committee shall be as follows:

- 1 (1) the Commissioner of Education, or a designee;
- 2 (2) the Commissioner of Children and Families, or a designee;
- 3 (3) the Commissioner of Human Services, or a designee;
- 4 (4) the Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development, or a
- 5 designee;
- 6 (5) the Commissioner of Health, or a designee;
- 7 (6) the Chief Executive Officer of the New Jersey Economic
- 8 Development Authority, or a designee;
- 9 (7) one member appointed by the President of the Senate, who
- 10 shall be an employee of the Legislature; and
- 11 (8) one member appointed by the Speaker of the General
- 12 Assembly, who shall be an employee of the Legislature.
- 13 b. The duties of the committee shall be as follows:
- 14 (1) recommending to the Governor and Legislature a funding
- 15 methodology for preschool costs to be implemented for all school
- 16 districts beginning in the 2028-2029 school year, which may include
- 17 proposing a Preschool Adequacy Budget and preschool education aid
- 18 formula modeled after the calculation of equalization aid pursuant to
- 19 section 11 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-53);
- 20 (2) evaluating the pilot program established pursuant to subsection
- 21 h. of section 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54) for school districts
- 22 that first receive preschool education aid in the 2025-2026, 2026-2027,
- 23 and 2027-2028 school years;
- 24 (3) proposing methods to incentivize school districts to pursue
- 25 mixed delivery partnerships with licensed child care providers and
- 26 Head Start programs;
- 27 (4) proposing optional methods for school districts to establish
- 28 centralized enrollment systems that prioritize family choice first in
- 29 determining a preschool student's placement setting;
- 30 (5) analyzing whether providing an adjustment to school districts'
- 31 tax levy growth limitation related to preschool costs is necessary or
- 32 beneficial to the State's preschool expansion efforts; and
- 33 (6) recommending any appropriate means by which the State can
- 34 seek to strengthen and expand the preschool workforce.
- 35 c. The steering committee ¹**may** shall¹ convene one or more
- 36 local subcommittees to solicit input from local practitioners to
- 37 facilitate completion of the requirements set forth in subsection b. of
- 38 this section.
- 39 d. The steering committee shall organize within 90 days of the
- 40 effective date of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature
- 41 as this bill).
- 42
- 43 10. (New section) The Department of Education, in consultation
- 44 with the Department of Children and Families, shall develop and
- 45 periodically update a Mixed Delivery Model Preschool Handbook
- 46 to compile all State requirements and associated guidance
- 47 documents, organized by topic, deemed relevant by the

- 1 Commissioner of Education. The topics addressed in the handbook
 2 shall include, but not be limited to:
- 3 a. funding and staffing requirements;
 - 4 b. school district and licensed child care provider program
 5 administration;
 - 6 c. eligibility, recruitment, and enrollment;
 - 7 d. family engagement;
 - 8 e. curriculum;
 - 9 f. child assessments;
 - 10 g. classroom assessments and program evaluation;
 - 11 h. optional strategies for school districts to establish centralized
 12 enrollment systems that prioritize family choice first in determining
 13 a preschool student's placement setting; and
 - 14 i. strategies for supporting contracted licensed child care
 15 providers in maintaining access to infant and toddler care.

16
 17 11. (New section) In order to strengthen and expand the
 18 preschool workforce, the Secretary of Higher Education shall
 19 develop guidance encouraging two- and four-year public
 20 institutions of higher education to enter into joint dual degree
 21 admission agreements that require all credits earned toward Early
 22 Childhood Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degrees to be
 23 fully transferable and applicable to course requirements for
 24 educator preparation programs at four-year institutions of higher
 25 education.

26
 27 ¹12. (New section) The Department of Children and Families,
 28 in consultation with the Department of Human Services and
 29 Department of Education, shall develop guidance for licensed child
 30 care providers to establish graduated salary scales for private
 31 teachers working toward preschool certification. The guidance
 32 shall encourage the development of salary scales that provide salary
 33 increases for increased academic preparation, including the
 34 completion of a Child Development Associate credential, the
 35 attainment of credits toward degree completion, the award of a
 36 bachelor's degree in early childhood education, and the receipt of
 37 an early childhood teacher certification. ¹

38
 39 ¹13] 12¹. N.J.S.18A:44-2 is amended to read as follows:
 40 18A:44-2. a. The board of education of **any** a district **may**
 41 serving elementary grades shall establish a kindergarten school or
 42 kindergarten department, which in order to receive State aid shall
 43 be a one-year program in advance of or in preparation for entrance
 44 to first grade, in any school under its control, and **may** admit to
 45 such kindergarten school or department any child over the age of
 46 four and under the age of five and **shall** admit to **such** the
 47 kindergarten school or department any child over the age of five

1 and under the age of six years as of October 1 of that school year
2 who is a resident of the district , but a board of education may, in its
3 discretion, admit any student who turns five after this date if they
4 meet entrance requirements as may be established by the rules and
5 regulations of the board through a board approved policy.

6 b. A kindergarten school or kindergarten department established
7 by a board of education shall provide a full-day kindergarten
8 program no later than the beginning of the 2029-2030 school year;
9 provided, however, that a district not providing a full-day
10 kindergarten program prior to the effective date of
11 P.L. , c. (pending before the Legislature as this bill) may satisfy
12 the requirements of this subsection by entering a sending-receiving
13 relationship with a kindergarten school or kindergarten department
14 established by the board of education of an adjacent school district.
15 The tuition of students attending a kindergarten school or
16 kindergarten department in another district in accordance with a
17 sending-receive agreement shall be determined in accordance with
18 N.J.S.18A:38-19. Attendance at a kindergarten school or
19 kindergarten department shall be free in accordance with the
20 requirements of N.J.S.18A:38-1.

21 (cf: P.L.1996, c.138, s.72)

22
23 ¹**[14]** 13¹. Section 8 of P.L.2000, c.72 (C.18A:7G-8) is
24 amended to read as follows:

25 8. a. The number of unhoused students shall be calculated as the
26 number of FTE students who are projected to be enrolled in
27 **[preschool for children with disabilities, preschool,]** kindergarten,
28 grades 1 through 12, and special education services pupil
29 educational programs provided in a district within five years, which
30 are in excess of the functional capacity of the district's current
31 school facilities or the functional capacity of the school facilities
32 which will be available within five years other than the school
33 facilities for which the preliminary eligible costs are determined,
34 based upon the district's long-range facilities plan. The
35 determination of unhoused capacity shall separately consider
36 projected enrollments and functional capacities at the **[early**
37 **childhood and]** elementary (**[preschool]** kindergarten through
38 grade 5), middle (grades 6 through 8), and high school (grades 9
39 through 12) levels. For the purpose of calculating the district's
40 unhoused students, special education services students shall be
41 considered part of the grade level to which the students'
42 chronological age corresponds. In the event that the commissioner
43 approves a school facilities project which involves the construction
44 of a new school facility to replace an existing school facility, which
45 shall accommodate both the unhoused students and the students in
46 the existing school facility, the calculation of the number of

1 unhoused students shall include the number of students currently
2 attending the existing facility which is to be replaced.

3 b. Approved area for unhoused students (AU) shall be
4 determined according to the following formula:

$$5 \quad AU = [(UEC \times SEC) +] (UE \times SE) + (UM \times SM) + (UH \times SH)$$

6 where

7 **UEC,** UE, UM, UH are the numbers of unhoused students in
8 the **early childhood,** elementary, middle, and high school
9 enrollment categories, respectively; and

10 **SEC,** SE, SM, SH are the area allowances per FTE student in
11 **preschool and** kindergarten **, grades 1** through grade 5, grades
12 6 through 8, and grades 9 through 12, respectively. Area allowances
13 shall be determined based on the grade level of a student regardless
14 of the grade configurations used in the school buildings of the
15 district.

16 The minimum area allowance per FTE student shall be as
17 follows:

18 Preschool <u>Kindergarten</u> through grade 5	125 sq. ft.
19 Grades 6 through 8	134 sq. ft.
20 Grades 9 through 12	151 sq. ft.

21 The commissioner, in consultation with the State Treasurer and
22 the Commissioner of Community Affairs, shall adopt regulations
23 that establish a process for the consideration of special
24 circumstances, in addition to those provided in section 5 of
25 P.L.2010, c.72 (C.18A:7G-5), in which the area allowances per FTE
26 student established pursuant to this subsection may be adjusted.
27 Any decision made by the commissioner pursuant to those
28 regulations shall be made in consultation with the State Treasurer
29 and the Commissioner of Community Affairs.

30 (cf: P.L.2017, c.131, s.18)

31

32 ¹**[15]** 14¹. (New section) The Commissioner of Education shall
33 adopt, pursuant to the “Administrative Procedure Act,” P.L.1968,
34 c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), rules and regulations necessary to
35 effectuate the provisions of this act.

36

37 ¹**[16]** 15¹. This act shall take effect immediately ¹.¹

[Second Reprint]

ASSEMBLY, No. 5717

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

221st LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MAY 22, 2025

Sponsored by:

Assemblywoman ANDREA KATZ

District 8 (Atlantic and Burlington)

Assemblyman STERLEY S. STANLEY

District 18 (Middlesex)

Co-Sponsored by:

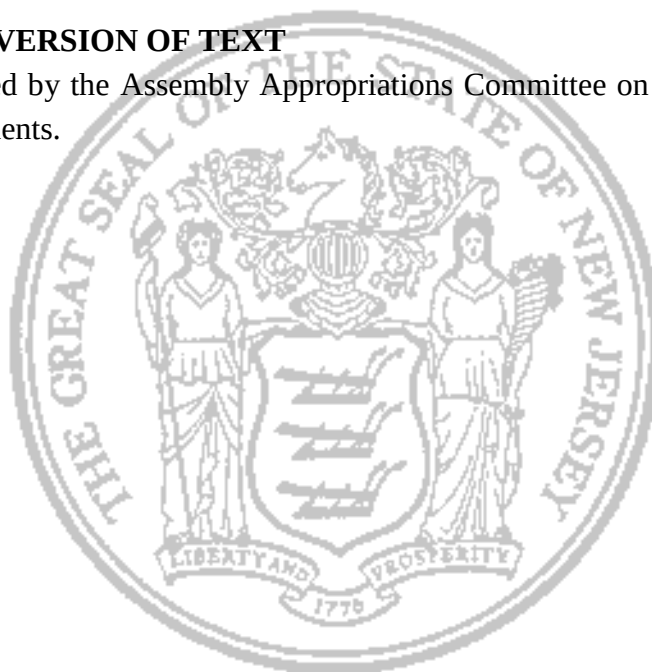
Assemblywomen Haider, Donlon, Ramirez, Quijano, Peterpaul and Morales

SYNOPSIS

Makes various changes to provision of preschool aid and facilities requirements; establishes Universal Preschool Implementation Steering Committee; requires full-day kindergarten in all school districts.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As reported by the Assembly Appropriations Committee on June 19, 2025, with amendments.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 6/30/2025)

1 AN ACT concerning early childhood education, amending various
2 parts of the statutory law, and supplementing P.L.2007, c.260
3 ¹and chapters 26 and 44 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes¹.
4

5 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
6 of New Jersey:
7

8 1. (New section) Sections 1 and 2 ¹**[,]** and¹ 6 through ¹**[12, and**
9 **15]** 11¹ of this act shall be known and may be cited as the “New
10 Jersey Universal Preschool and Kindergarten Act.”
11

12 2. (New section) The Legislature finds and declares that:

13 a. Research is clear that high-quality preschool can change the
14 educational trajectories of young children, particularly
15 economically disadvantaged children and multilingual learners.
16 Improvements in literacy, numeracy, social-emotional and self-
17 regulatory development, and lifetime earnings have been
18 demonstrated among individuals who attend high-quality preschool
19 compared to their peers.

20 b. New Jersey leads the nation in expanding access to high-
21 quality preschool opportunities. The State has achieved a unique
22 and world-class combination of significant financial investment and
23 rigorous quality standards. New Jersey State-funded preschools are
24 required to serve three- and four-year olds in full-day programs
25 featuring small class sizes led by quality instructors with ample
26 curriculum support, professional development, and accommodations
27 for students with special needs. New Jersey’s State spending on
28 preschool is among the highest in the country, with clear,
29 significant impacts on our public school system: tens of thousands
30 of three- and four-year olds in hundreds of communities around the
31 State attend transformative high-quality early education programs.

32 c. District-operated preschool programs, licensed childcare
33 centers, and Head Start programs form an interrelated and
34 interdependent early childhood ecosystem. Each component is made
35 stronger by the other, and the system is greater and more impactful
36 than the sum of its parts. No component can reach its full potential
37 without the facilities, staff, resources, and expertise of the others.
38 Together, the system represents a continuum of education and care
39 services from birth through age five necessary not only for children
40 to realize their full life potential, but for families to participate fully
41 in economic and civic society. To lift up this system is a moral and
42 economic imperative.

43 d. To build on the State’s preschool expansion progress to date
44 and to realize the full benefits of high-quality preschool, it is fitting

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets **[thus]** in the above bill is
not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

Matter enclosed in superscript numerals has been adopted as follows:

¹Assembly AED committee amendments adopted June 16, 2025.

²Assembly AAP committee amendments adopted June 19, 2025.

1 and proper for the State to enshrine certain policies and values in
2 State law, including:

3 (1) providing sustainable, annual financial support for
4 expanding access to high-quality preschool;

5 (2) codifying preschool education aid provisions previously
6 implemented through language in various annual appropriations
7 acts and harmonizing New Jersey law accordingly;

8 (3) prioritizing expansion for economically disadvantaged
9 families and communities;

10 (4) requiring State-funded preschool programs to make every
11 effort to partner with local ready, willing, and able licensed
12 childcare providers and Head Start programs; and

13 (5) conducting ongoing evaluations of the State's approach to
14 early childhood and preschool education to ensure that policy
15 continues to reflect stakeholder expertise and evolving research.

16 e. In addition to high-quality preschool education, full-day
17 kindergarten is necessary not only to unlock a child's full learning
18 potential, but to facilitate a smooth transition from high-quality
19 preschool into elementary programs.

20

21 3. Section 3 of P.L.2007, c.62 (C.18A:7F-38) is amended to read
22 as follows:

23 3. a. Notwithstanding the provisions of any other law to the
24 contrary, a school district shall not adopt a budget pursuant to sections
25 5 and 6 of P.L.1996, c.138 (C.18A:7F-5 and 18A:7F-6) with an
26 increase in its adjusted tax levy that exceeds, except as provided in
27 subsection e. of section 4 of P.L.2007, c.62 (C.18A:7F-39), the tax
28 levy growth limitation calculated as follows: the sum of the prebudget
29 year adjusted tax levy and the adjustment for increases in enrollment
30 multiplied by 2.0 percent, and adjustments for an increase in health
31 care costs, increases in amounts for certain normal and accrued
32 liability pension contributions set forth in sections 1 and 2 of P.L.2009,
33 c.19 amending section 24 of P.L.1954, c.84 (C.43:15A-24) and section
34 15 of P.L.1944, c.255 (C.43:16A-15) for the year set forth in those
35 sections, **[and,]** in the case of an SDA district as defined pursuant to
36 section 3 of P.L.2000, c.72 (C.18A:7G-3), during the 2018-2019
37 through the 2024-2025 school years, increases to raise a general fund
38 tax levy to an amount that does not exceed its local share , and, in the
39 case of a school district first receiving preschool education aid in the
40 2025-2026, 2026-2027, or 2027-2028 school years and participating in
41 the pilot program established by the commissioner pursuant to
42 subsection h. of ²section² 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54),
43 increases to raise a general fund tax levy for the local share of
44 preschool education costs.

45 b. (1) The allowable adjustment for increases in enrollment
46 authorized pursuant to subsection a. of this section shall equal the per

1 pupil prebudget year adjusted tax levy multiplied by EP, where EP
2 equals the sum of:

3 (a) 0.50 for each unit of weighted resident enrollment that
4 constitutes an increase from the prebudget year over 1%, but not more
5 than 2.5%;

6 (b) 0.75 for each unit of weighted resident enrollment that
7 constitutes an increase from the prebudget year over 2.5%, but not
8 more than 4%; and

9 (c) 1.00 for each unit of weighted resident enrollment that
10 constitutes an increase from the prebudget year over 4%.

11 (2) A school district may request approval from the commissioner
12 to calculate EP equal to 1.00 for any increase in weighted resident
13 enrollment if it can demonstrate that the calculation pursuant to
14 paragraph (1) of this subsection would result in an average class size
15 that exceeds 10% above the facilities efficiency standards established
16 pursuant to P.L.2000, c.72 (C.18A:7G-1 et al.).

17 c. (Deleted by amendment, P.L.2010, c.44)

18 d. (1) The allowable adjustment for increases in health care costs
19 authorized pursuant to subsection a. of this section shall equal that
20 portion of the actual increase in total health care costs for the budget
21 year, less any withdrawals from the current expense emergency
22 reserve account for increases in total health care costs, that exceeds 2.0
23 percent of the total health care costs in the prebudget year, but that is
24 not in excess of the product of the total health care costs in the
25 prebudget year multiplied by the average percentage increase of the
26 State Health Benefits Program, P.L.1961, c.49 (C.52:14-17.25 et seq.),
27 as annually determined by the Division of Pensions and Benefits in the
28 Department of the Treasury.

29 (2) The allowable adjustment for increases in the amount of
30 normal and accrued liability pension contributions authorized pursuant
31 to subsection a. of this section shall equal that portion of the actual
32 increase in total normal and accrued liability pension contributions for
33 the budget year that exceeds 2.0 percent of the total normal and
34 accrued liability pension contributions in the prebudget year.

35 (3) In the case of an SDA district, as defined pursuant to section 3
36 of P.L.2000, c.72 (C.18A:7G-3), in which the prebudget year adjusted
37 tax levy is less than the school district's prebudget year local share as
38 calculated pursuant to section 10 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-52),
39 the allowable adjustment for increases to raise a tax levy that does not
40 exceed the school district's local share shall equal the difference
41 between the prebudget year adjusted tax levy and the prebudget year
42 local share.

43 (4) In the case of a school district first receiving preschool
44 education aid in the 2025-2026, 2026-2027, or 2027-2028 school years
45 and participating in the pilot program established by the commissioner
46 pursuant to subsection h. of ²section² 12 of P.L.2007, c.260
47 (C.18A:7F-54), the allowable adjustment for increases to raise a
48 general fund tax levy for the local share of preschool education costs

1 shall be equal to the actual increase required to provide preschool
2 education under the pilot program less State aid provided pursuant to
3 subsection h. of ²section² 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54).

4 A school district first receiving preschool education aid in the
5 2025-2026 school year and participating in the pilot program
6 established by the commissioner pursuant to subsection h. of ²section²
7 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54) may, prior to the delivery of tax
8 bills pursuant to R.S.54:4-64, recertify to the county board of taxation
9 the sum to be raised in the district during the ensuing school year if the
10 change in the amount to be raised is equal to the district's local share
11 of preschool education costs for that school year.

12 e. (Deleted by amendment, P.L.2010, c.44)

13 f. The adjusted tax levy shall be increased or decreased
14 accordingly whenever the responsibility and associated cost of a
15 school district activity is transferred to another school district or
16 governmental entity.

17 (cf: P.L.2018, c.67, s.6)

18
19 4. Section 3 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-45) is amended to
20 read as follows:

21 3. As used in **[this act]** P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-43 et al.)
22 and P.L.1996, c.138 (C.18A:7F-1 et al.), unless the context clearly
23 requires a different meaning:

24 "At-risk pupils" means those resident pupils from households
25 with a household income at or below the most recent federal
26 poverty guidelines available on October 15 of the prebudget year
27 multiplied by 1.85;

28 "Base per pupil amount" means the cost per elementary pupil of
29 delivering the core curriculum content standards and extracurricular
30 and cocurricular activities necessary for a thorough and efficient
31 education;

32 "Bilingual education pupil" means a resident pupil enrolled in a
33 program of bilingual education or in an English as a second
34 language program approved by the State Board of Education;

35 "Budgeted local share" means the district's local tax levy
36 contained in the budget certified for taxation purposes;

37 "Capital outlay" means capital outlay as defined in GAAP;

38 "Combination pupil" means a resident pupil who is both an at-
39 risk pupil and a bilingual education pupil;

40 "Commissioner" means the Commissioner of Education;

41 "Concentration of at-risk pupils" shall be based on prebudget
42 year pupil data and means, for a school district or a county
43 vocational school district, the number of at-risk pupils among those
44 counted in resident enrollment, divided by resident enrollment;

45 "County special services school district" means any entity
46 established pursuant to article 8 of chapter 46 of Title 18A of the
47 New Jersey Statutes;

1 "County vocational school district" means any entity established
2 pursuant to article 3 of chapter 54 of Title 18A of the New Jersey
3 Statutes;

4 "CPI" means the increase, expressed as a decimal, in the average
5 annualized consumer price index for the New York City and
6 Philadelphia areas in the fiscal year preceding the prebudget year
7 relative to the previous fiscal year as reported by the United States
8 Department of Labor;

9 "Debt service" means payments of principal and interest upon
10 school bonds and other obligations issued to finance the purchase or
11 construction of school facilities, additions to school facilities, or the
12 reconstruction, remodeling, alteration, modernization, renovation or
13 repair of school facilities, including furnishings, equipment,
14 architect fees, and the costs of issuance of such obligations and
15 shall include payments of principal and interest upon bonds
16 heretofore issued to fund or refund such obligations, and upon
17 municipal bonds and other obligations which the commissioner
18 approves as having been issued for such purposes;

19 "District income" means the aggregate income of the residents of
20 the taxing district or taxing districts, based upon data provided by
21 the Division of Taxation in the New Jersey Department of the
22 Treasury and contained on the New Jersey State Income Tax forms
23 for the calendar year ending two years prior to the prebudget year.
24 The commissioner may supplement data contained on the State
25 Income Tax forms with data available from other State or federal
26 agencies in order to better correlate the data to that collected on the
27 federal census. With respect to regional districts and their
28 constituent districts, however, the district income as described
29 above shall be allocated among the regional and constituent districts
30 in proportion to the number of pupils resident in each of them;

31 "Equalized valuation" means the equalized valuation of the
32 taxing district or taxing districts, as certified by the Director of the
33 Division of Taxation on October 1, or subsequently revised by the
34 tax court by January 15, of the prebudget year. With respect to
35 regional districts and their constituent districts, however, the
36 equalized valuations as described above shall be allocated among
37 the regional and constituent districts in proportion to the number of
38 pupils resident in each of them. In the event that the equalized table
39 certified by the director shall be revised by the tax court after
40 January 15 of the prebudget year, the revised valuations shall be
41 used in the recomputation of aid for an individual school district
42 filing an appeal, but shall have no effect upon the calculation of the
43 property value rate, Statewide average equalized school tax rate, or
44 Statewide equalized total tax rate;

45 "Full-day preschool" means a preschool day consisting of a
46 minimum six-hour comprehensive educational program in
47 accordance with the district's kindergarten through grade 12 school
48 calendar;

1 "GAAP" means the generally accepted accounting principles
2 established by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board as
3 prescribed by the State board pursuant to N.J.S.18A:4-14;

4 "General special education services pupil" means a pupil
5 receiving specific services pursuant to chapter 46 of Title 18A of
6 the New Jersey Statutes;

7 "Geographic cost adjustment" means an adjustment that reflects
8 county differences in the cost of providing educational services that
9 are outside the control of the district;

10 "Household income" means income as defined in 7 CFR ss.245.2
11 and 245.6 or any subsequent superseding federal law or regulation;

12 "Net budget" means the sum of the district's general fund tax
13 levy, State aid received pursuant to the provisions of this act other
14 than preschool education aid, miscellaneous revenue estimated
15 pursuant to GAAP, and designated general fund balance;

16 **["Prebudget year" means the school fiscal year preceding the**
17 **year in which the school budget is implemented;]**

18 "Nonpreschool ECPA" means the amount of early childhood
19 program aid, excluding prior year carry-forward amounts, included
20 in a district's 2007-2008 school year budget certified for taxes that
21 was allocated to grades K through 3;

22 "Prebudget year" means the school fiscal year preceding the year
23 in which the school budget is implemented;

24 "Preschool expansion grant" means any grant funded by a
25 portion of preschool education aid allocated by the Commissioner
26 of Education or any other State funds appropriated for the purpose
27 of expanding free access to high-quality preschool for resident
28 three- and four-year old children in districts that do not, at the time
29 of application for a grant, provide State-funded, high-quality, free
30 preschool programs;

31 "Report" means the Educational Adequacy Report issued by the
32 commissioner pursuant to section 4 of this act;

33 "Resident enrollment" means the number of pupils other than
34 preschool pupils, post-graduate pupils, and post-secondary
35 vocational pupils who, on the last school day prior to October 16 of
36 the current school year, are residents of the district and are enrolled
37 in: (1) the public schools of the district, excluding evening schools,
38 (2) another school district, other than a county vocational school
39 district in the same county on a full-time basis, or a State college
40 demonstration school or private school to which the district of
41 residence pays tuition, or (3) a State facility in which they are
42 placed by the district; or are residents of the district and are: (1)
43 receiving home instruction, or (2) in a shared-time vocational
44 program and are regularly attending a school in the district and a
45 county vocational school district. In addition, resident enrollment
46 shall include the number of pupils who, on the last school day prior
47 to October 16 of the prebudget year, are residents of the district and

1 in a State facility in which they were placed by the State. Pupils in
2 a shared-time vocational program shall be counted on an equated
3 full-time basis in accordance with procedures to be established by
4 the commissioner. Resident enrollment shall include regardless of
5 nonresidence, the enrolled children of teaching staff members of the
6 school district or county vocational school district who are
7 permitted, by contract or local district policy, to enroll their
8 children in the educational program of the school district or county
9 vocational school district without payment of tuition. Disabled
10 children between three and five years of age and receiving programs
11 and services pursuant to N.J.S.18A:46-6 shall be included in the
12 resident enrollment of the district;

13 "School district" means any local or regional school district
14 established pursuant to chapter 8 or chapter 13 of Title 18A of the
15 New Jersey Statutes;

16 "State facility" means a State developmental center, a State
17 Division of Youth and Family Services' residential center, a State
18 residential mental health center, a Department of Children and
19 Families Regional Day School, a State training school/secure care
20 facility, a State juvenile community program, a juvenile detention
21 center or a boot camp under the supervisory authority of the
22 Youth Justice Commission pursuant to P.L.1995, c.284 (C.52:17B-
23 169 et seq.), or an institution operated by or under contract with the
24 Department of Corrections, Children and Families or Human
25 Services, or the Youth Justice Commission;

26 "Statewide equalized school tax rate" means the amount
27 calculated by dividing the general fund tax levy for all school
28 districts, which excludes county vocational school districts and
29 county special services school districts as defined pursuant to this
30 section, in the State for the prebudget year by the equalized
31 valuations certified in the year prior to the prebudget year of all
32 taxing districts in the State except taxing districts for which there
33 are not school tax levies;

34 "Tax levy growth limitation" means the permitted annual
35 increase in the adjusted tax levy for a school district as calculated
36 pursuant to sections 3 and 4 of P.L.2007, c.62 (C.18A:7F-38 and
37 18A:7F-39).

38 (cf: P.L.2025, c.35, s.37)

39

40 5. Section 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54) is amended to
41 read as follows:

42 12. a. **■**District factor group A and B school districts, and district
43 factor group CD school districts with a concentration of at-risk
44 pupils equal to or greater than 40%, shall provide free access to
45 full-day preschool for all three- and four-year old pupils. All other
46 school districts shall provide free access to full-day preschool for
47 at-risk pupils. Preschool education aid shall reflect the cost of the
48 pupil's placement in either a district program, a licensed child care

1 provider program, or a Head Start Program.】 (Deleted by
2 amendment, P.L. , c.) (pending before the Legislature as this
3 bill)

4 (1) **【Preschool】** In the case of a school district that received
5 preschool education aid in the 2024-2025 school year, preschool
6 education aid shall be calculated **【for district factor group A and B**
7 school districts, and for district factor group CD school districts
8 with a concentration of at-risk pupils equal to or greater than 40%,**】**
9 as follows:

10 $Aid = (IDE \times IDA) + (PRE \times PRA) + (HSE \times HSA)$

11 where

12 IDE is the **【number】** projected FTE enrollment for the upcoming
13 school year of district pupils, other than preschool disabled pupils,
14 in an in-district preschool program;

15 IDA is the per pupil aid amount for an in-district preschool
16 program;

17 PRE is the **【number】** projected FTE enrollment for the upcoming
18 school year of district pupils, other than preschool disabled pupils,
19 in a preschool program operated by a licensed child care provider;

20 PRA is the per pupil aid amount for a preschool program
21 operated by a licensed child care provider;

22 HSE is the **【number】** projected FTE enrollment for the
23 upcoming school year of district pupils, other than preschool
24 disabled pupils, in a Head Start Program; and

25 HSA is the per pupil aid amount for a Head Start Program.

26 **【A CD school district with a concentration of at-risk pupils equal to**
27 **or greater than 40% shall be eligible to receive preschool education**
28 **aid pursuant to the provisions of this paragraph for a minimum of**
29 **three school years from the time of initial determination of**
30 **eligibility even if the district's concentration of at-risk pupils falls**
31 **below a 40% concentration of at-risk pupils. In the event that the**
32 **district falls below a 40% concentration of at-risk pupils for two**
33 **consecutive school years, in the third school year the district shall**
34 **receive preschool education aid for each at-risk pupil and for any**
35 **four-year old pupil for whom the district received preschool**
36 **education aid in the prior school year, and that pupil shall receive**
37 **free preschool education.】**

38 (2) **【Preschool education aid shall be calculated for all other**
39 **districts as follows:**

40 $Aid = (ARID \times IDA) + (ARP \times PRA) + (ARHS \times HSA)$

41 where

42 ARID is the number of at-risk district pupils, other than
43 preschool disabled pupils, in an in-district preschool program;

44 IDA is the per pupil aid amount for an in-district preschool
45 program;

1 ARP is the number of at-risk district pupils, other than preschool
2 disabled pupils, in a preschool program operated by a licensed child
3 care provider;

4 PRA is the per pupil aid amount for a preschool program
5 operated by a licensed child care provider;

6 ARHS is the number of at-risk district pupils, other than
7 preschool disabled pupils, in a Head Start Program; and

8 HSA is the per pupil aid amount for a Head Start Program.】
9 (Deleted by amendment, P.L. , c.) (pending before the
10 Legislature as this bill)

11 b. 【In accordance with regulations adopted by the
12 commissioner, all districts shall submit a five-year plan that
13 provides for the full implementation of full-day preschool for all
14 eligible three- and four-year olds by the 2013-2014 school year. For
15 the purposes of this section, "full implementation" means serving
16 90% of eligible pupils in accordance with the preschool quality
17 standards adopted by the commissioner or such greater percentage
18 as determined by the commissioner. A school district shall annually
19 update the five-year plan based on actual implementation
20 experience and shall revise its pupil projections in accordance with
21 that experience.】 (Deleted by amendment, P.L. , c.) (pending
22 before the Legislature as this bill)

23 c. (1) 【In the case of a school district that did not receive any
24 form of preschool aid in the 2007-2008 school year, the 2008-2009
25 school year shall be a preschool planning year. Beginning in the
26 2009-2010 school year, the school district shall receive preschool
27 education aid calculated in accordance with the provisions of
28 subsection a. of this section based upon projected preschool
29 enrollment.

30 In the 2009-2010 school year the school district may also receive
31 start-up funds in accordance with regulations adopted by the
32 commissioner.】 (Deleted by amendment, P.L. , c.) (pending
33 before the Legislature as this bill)

34 (2) In the case of a school district that received Early Launch to
35 Learning Initiative aid in the 2007-2008 school year, 【for the 2008-
36 2009 school year the district shall receive preschool education aid
37 in an amount equal to the district's allocation of Early Launch to
38 Learning Initiative aid in the 2007-2008 school year. Beginning in
39 the 2009-2010 school year,】 the school district shall receive
40 preschool education aid calculated in accordance with the
41 provisions of paragraph (1) of subsection a. of this section 【based
42 upon projected preschool enrollment.

43 In the 2009-2010 school year the school district may also receive
44 start-up funds in accordance with regulations adopted by the
45 commissioner】 pending a determination by the commissioner that
46 the district is prepared to meet all program requirements for high-

1 quality preschool pursuant to regulations adopted by the
2 commissioner.

3 (3) In the case of a school district that received early childhood
4 program aid in the 2007-2008 school year but did not receive
5 preschool expansion aid or education opportunity aid in that year,
6 **【**for the 2008-2009 school year the district shall receive preschool
7 education aid equal to the greater of the district's 2007-2008 amount
8 of early childhood program aid for preschool or the district's 2007-
9 2008 per pupil allocation of early childhood program aid as
10 included in the district's original 2007-2008 budget certified for
11 taxes, inflated by the CPI, and multiplied by the district's projected
12 preschool enrollment; except that if the district is able to
13 demonstrate in the five-year plan submitted to the commissioner
14 that it has the capacity to offer a full-day three- or four-year-old
15 program, or a full-day three- and four-year-old program, in the
16 2008-2009 school year, the commissioner may approve the funding
17 of the full-day program calculated in accordance with the provisions
18 of subsection a. of this section based upon projected preschool
19 enrollment. The district shall be informed of the commissioner's
20 determination upon approval of the five-year plan. Beginning in the
21 2009-2010 school year,**】** the school district shall receive preschool
22 education aid calculated in accordance with the provisions of
23 paragraph (1) of subsection a. of this section **【**based upon projected
24 preschool enrollment.

25 In the 2009-2010 school year the school district may also receive
26 start-up funds in accordance with regulations adopted by the
27 commissioner**】** pending a determination by the commissioner that
28 the district is prepared to meet all program requirements for high-
29 quality preschool pursuant to regulations adopted by the
30 commissioner.

31 (4) **【**In the case of a school district that received preschool
32 expansion aid or education opportunity aid in the 2007-2008 school
33 year, for the 2008-2009 school year the district shall receive
34 preschool education aid in an amount equal to the preschool budget
35 approved by the commissioner for the 2008-2009 school year.
36 Preschool education aid for the 2008-2009 school year shall be
37 adjusted following receipt of the Application for State School Aid
38 in October 2008. Beginning in the 2009-2010 school year, the
39 school district shall receive preschool education aid calculated in
40 accordance with the provisions of subsection a. of this section based
41 upon projected preschool enrollment; except that for any school
42 year the district shall not receive preschool aid in an amount less
43 than either the total amount of preschool aid the district received in
44 the 2008-2009 school year after the State aid adjustment or the
45 district's 2008-2009 school year preschool per pupil aid amount
46 multiplied by the projected number of preschool pupils after the
47 State aid adjustment, whichever is greater.

1 In the 2009-2010 school year the school district may also receive
2 start-up funds in accordance with regulations adopted by the
3 commissioner.】 (Deleted by amendment, P.L. _____, c. _____) (pending
4 before the Legislature as this bill)

5 d. For the 2008-2009 school year, the preschool per pupil aid
6 amounts shall be \$11,506 for pupils enrolled in an in-district
7 program, \$12,934 for pupils enrolled in a licensed child care
8 provider program, and \$7,146 for pupils enrolled in a Head Start
9 Program. The preschool per pupil aid amounts shall be adjusted by
10 the CPI in the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school years as required
11 pursuant to subsection b. of section 4 of this act. For subsequent
12 school years, the preschool per pupil aid amounts shall be
13 established in the Educational Adequacy Report, with the amounts
14 adjusted by the CPI for each of the two school years following the
15 first school year to which the report is applicable.

16 e. A district shall appropriate preschool education aid in a
17 special revenue fund for expenditure. In the event that any
18 preschool education aid is not expended during the budget year, the
19 aid may be carried forward in accordance with regulations adopted
20 by the commissioner.

21 f. In the event that a district has fully implemented a full-day
22 preschool program for three- and four-year old pupils 【in
23 accordance with its five-year plan】 and meets the preschool quality
24 standards or has provided preschool education to the number of
25 eligible students to be served during a school year in accordance
26 with 【that plan and its annual updates and】 the preschool quality
27 standards, the district may appropriate preschool education aid 【to
28 support kindergarten through grade 12 or to provide preschool
29 education for three- and four-year old pupils for whom the district
30 is not required to provide preschool education upon the approval of
31 the commissioner. The district shall request approval in its annual
32 plan update and any approval granted by the commissioner shall be
33 made during the annual school budget process】 for additional
34 purposes that may be designated by the commissioner, which
35 purposes shall include, but not be limited to, providing summer
36 programming for preschool students, professional development for
37 preschool staff, preschool facilities improvements, and
38 transportation services for preschool pupils.

39 g. A school district shall maintain the preschool quality
40 standards as adopted by the commissioner as a condition of receipt
41 of preschool education aid.

42 h. In the case of a school district that first receives preschool
43 education aid in the 2025-2026, 2026-2027, or 2027-2028 school
44 years, the aid shall be provided, within the limit of available
45 appropriations, pursuant to a three-year pilot program established
46 by the commissioner that includes a cost sharing methodology
47 between the State and the school district such that the amount of

1 preschool education aid allocated to the district shall be calculated
2 by multiplying the district aid percentage by the amount calculated
3 pursuant to the formula in paragraph (1) of subsection a. of this
4 section, where the district aid percentage shall be equal to the
5 greater of the district aid percentage as defined pursuant to section 3
6 of P.L.2000, c.72 (C.18A:7G-3) or 40 percent of eligible costs.

7 i. A school district receiving preschool education aid shall
8 obtain approval by the Commissioner of Education, in a manner
9 prescribed by the commissioner, prior to implementing any
10 significant redistribution, as defined by the commissioner, of State-
11 funded preschool seats among district-operated programs, licensed
12 child care providers, and Head Start programs.

13 (cf: P.L.2007, c.260, s.12)

14
15 6. (New section) a. The Department of Education shall, within the
16 limit of funds appropriated, annually provide at least one opportunity
17 to award preschool expansion grants in accordance with the provisions
18 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill).
19 A school district shall be eligible to apply for and receive a preschool
20 expansion grant if the district provides full-day kindergarten at the
21 time of application and meets any other criteria the Commissioner of
22 Education deems appropriate. An eligible school district shall submit
23 an application to the commissioner, in a manner and form determined
24 by the commissioner, which application shall include, but not be
25 limited to, the following:

26 (1) a general overview of the district's proposed preschool
27 program operational plan;

28 (2) enrollment projections for preschool students, other than
29 preschool students with disabilities, for the next five years;

30 (3) a description of the district's proposed preschool curriculum;

31 (4) a description of intended strategies to ensure the inclusion of
32 preschool children with disabilities in general education settings to the
33 maximum extent possible;

34 (5) a description of intended strategies to annually identify and
35 recruit families of at-risk pupils and other hard-to-reach populations,
36 and subsequently ensure these children receive priority placement in
37 the preschool program;

38 (6) a demonstration of due diligence to partner with all ready,
39 willing, and able licensed child care providers and Head Start
40 programs in the district's immediate and neighboring communities ¹,
41 which shall be made in a manner determined by the commissioner and
42 shall include, but not be limited to, documenting all efforts the
43 applicant made to engage with all licensed child care providers and
44 Head Start programs in the applicant's immediate and neighboring
45 communities¹;

46 (7) an analysis of community need and the potential impact of a
47 mixed delivery model of preschool education in a format determined

1 by the commissioner or, if the applicant does not propose a mixed
2 delivery model, justification for the decision not to do so, which
3 justification shall include evidence that the district has adequate
4 facility and staffing resources to implement high-quality preschool
5 education without a mixed delivery model ²or that extenuating
6 circumstances in the eligible school district's community limit
7 accessibility to, or feasibility of partnership with, licensed childcare
8 centers and Head Start programs²; and

9 (8) a description of the strategies the district has in place for
10 serving eligible preschool students, with a five-year plan to serve 90
11 percent of the district's universe of three- and four-year olds.

12 b. In determining preschool expansion grant amounts and
13 recipients, the commissioner shall give preference to districts in
14 accordance with the concentration of at-risk pupils, as defined in
15 section 3 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-45). Preference given
16 pursuant to this subsection shall ensure that, all other application
17 criteria being equal, applicants with higher concentrations of at-risk
18 students receive funding priority. The commissioner may prioritize
19 applicants representing a consortium of school districts agreeing to
20 make a high-quality preschool program available in all member
21 districts.

22 c. The Department of Education, the Department of Children and
23 Families, and the Department of Human Services shall maintain on the
24 departments' Internet websites a page that includes:

25 (1) a list of all districts ¹**【receiving preschool expansion grants】**
26 offering State-funded preschool¹ for the school year;

27 (2) a list of all districts eligible to apply for preschool expansion
28 grants for the school year;

29 (3) a list of all licensed child care providers and Head Start
30 programs in each district's community, as well as in neighboring
31 communities; and

32 (4) the contact information for all district-operated preschool
33 programs, licensed child care providers, and Head Start programs.

34 d. The Department of Education, the Department of Children and
35 Families, and the Department of Human Services shall annually update
36 the information required pursuant to subsection c. of this section no
37 later than July 14 of each year. ¹The Department of Education, the
38 Department of Children and Families, and the Department of Human
39 Services shall update the information required pursuant to subsection
40 c. of this section in a timely manner after any preschool expansion
41 grants are awarded.¹

42
43 7. (New section) a. A school district that receives preschool
44 education aid pursuant to section 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-
45 54) shall:

1 (1) demonstrate due diligence to partner with all ready, willing,
2 and able licensed child care providers and Head Start programs in
3 the immediate and neighboring communities; and

4 (2) submit to the Department of Education an annual program
5 plan detailing the status of the district's preschool program
6 implementation. The plan shall include information specified by the
7 commissioner, including but not limited to:

8 (a) the district's comprehensive curriculum;

9 (b) protocol for how students' families can access community
10 services, including services offered by licensed child care providers
11 and Head Start programs;

12 (c) a description of how the district conducts outreach to
13 families to determine individual family needs, advocate on their
14 behalf, and obtain appropriate community services; and

15 (d) a description of how the district identifies and recruits
16 families of at-risk pupils and other hard-to-reach populations, and
17 subsequently ensures these children receive priority placement in
18 the preschool program.

19 b. A school district that receives preschool education aid
20 pursuant to section 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54) shall
21 participate in a system of self-assessment for continuous quality
22 improvement approved by the Department of Education to inform
23 the school district of the status of its preschool program
24 implementation. The system shall identify program areas in need of
25 improvement based on a self-assessment, and shall include a
26 validation visit by a State team at least once every three years. The
27 department may, based on the results of a district's self-assessment
28 and the validation visit, require the district to complete an
29 improvement plan. The improvement plan shall include a detailed
30 explanation and timeline of the steps the district will take to
31 improve areas identified for improvement.

32
33 8. (New section) The Department of Education, the Department
34 of Children and Families, and the Department of Human Services
35 shall, in consultation with school districts, licensed child care
36 providers, Head Start program providers, and other stakeholders
37 identified by the Commissioner of Education, submit a report to the
38 Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1) no
39 later than March 1 next following the date of enactment of P.L. ,
40 c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill) 'and each
41 March 1 annually thereafter' on the status of preschool education in
42 the State and the efficacy of the mixed delivery method of preschool
43 education. The Department of Education may utilize up to \$250,000 of
44 any appropriation for preschool education aid to contract temporary
45 staff to assist with the preparation of the report issued pursuant to this
46 section.

1 9. (New section) a. There is established in the Department of
2 Education a Universal Preschool Implementation Steering Committee.

3 The members of the committee shall be as follows:

4 (1) the Commissioner of Education, or a designee;

5 (2) the Commissioner of Children and Families, or a designee;

6 (3) the Commissioner of Human Services, or a designee;

7 (4) the Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development, or a
8 designee;

9 (5) the Commissioner of Health, or a designee;

10 (6) the Chief Executive Officer of the New Jersey Economic
11 Development Authority, or a designee;

12 (7) one member appointed by the President of the Senate, who
13 shall be an employee of the Legislature; and

14 (8) one member appointed by the Speaker of the General
15 Assembly, who shall be an employee of the Legislature.

16 b. The duties of the committee shall be as follows:

17 (1) recommending to the Governor and Legislature a funding
18 methodology for preschool costs to be implemented for all school
19 districts beginning in the 2028-2029 school year, which may include
20 proposing a Preschool Adequacy Budget and preschool education aid
21 formula modeled after the calculation of equalization aid pursuant to
22 section 11 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-53);

23 (2) evaluating the pilot program established pursuant to subsection
24 h. of section 12 of P.L.2007, c.260 (C.18A:7F-54) for school districts
25 that first receive preschool education aid in the 2025-2026, 2026-2027,
26 and 2027-2028 school years;

27 (3) proposing methods to incentivize school districts to pursue
28 mixed delivery partnerships with licensed child care providers and
29 Head Start programs;

30 (4) proposing optional methods for school districts to establish
31 centralized enrollment systems that prioritize family choice first in
32 determining a preschool student's placement setting;

33 (5) analyzing whether providing an adjustment to school districts'
34 tax levy growth limitation related to preschool costs is necessary or
35 beneficial to the State's preschool expansion efforts; and

36 (6) recommending any appropriate means by which the State can
37 seek to strengthen and expand the preschool workforce.

38 c. The steering committee ¹~~may~~ shall¹ convene one or more
39 local subcommittees to solicit input from local practitioners to
40 facilitate completion of the requirements set forth in subsection b. of
41 this section.

42 d. The steering committee shall organize within 90 days of the
43 effective date of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature
44 as this bill).

45
46 10. (New section) The Department of Education, in consultation
47 with the Department of Children and Families, shall develop and
48 periodically update a Mixed Delivery Model Preschool Handbook

1 to compile all State requirements and associated guidance
2 documents, organized by topic, deemed relevant by the
3 Commissioner of Education. The topics addressed in the handbook
4 shall include, but not be limited to:

- 5 a. funding and staffing requirements;
- 6 b. school district and licensed child care provider program
7 administration;
- 8 c. eligibility, recruitment, and enrollment;
- 9 d. family engagement;
- 10 e. curriculum;
- 11 f. child assessments;
- 12 g. classroom assessments and program evaluation;
- 13 h. optional strategies for school districts to establish centralized
14 enrollment systems that prioritize family choice first in determining
15 a preschool student's placement setting; and
- 16 i. strategies for supporting contracted licensed child care
17 providers in maintaining access to infant and toddler care.

18
19 11. (New section) In order to strengthen and expand the
20 preschool workforce, the Secretary of Higher Education shall
21 develop guidance encouraging two- and four-year public
22 institutions of higher education to enter into joint dual degree
23 admission agreements that require all credits earned toward Early
24 Childhood Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degrees to be
25 fully transferable and applicable to course requirements for
26 educator preparation programs at four-year institutions of higher
27 education.

28
29 ¹12. (New section) The Department of Children and Families,
30 in consultation with the Department of Human Services and
31 Department of Education, shall develop guidance for licensed child
32 care providers to establish graduated salary scales for private
33 teachers working toward preschool certification. The guidance
34 shall encourage the development of salary scales that provide salary
35 increases for increased academic preparation, including the
36 completion of a Child Development Associate credential, the
37 attainment of credits toward degree completion, the award of a
38 bachelor's degree in early childhood education, and the receipt of
39 an early childhood teacher certification. ¹

40
41 ¹13] 12¹. N.J.S.18A:44-2 is amended to read as follows:
42 18A:44-2. a. The board of education of **any** a district **may**
43 serving elementary grades shall establish a kindergarten school or
44 kindergarten department, which in order to receive State aid shall
45 be a one-year program in advance of or in preparation for entrance
46 to first grade, in any school under its control, and **may** admit to
47 such kindergarten school or department any child over the age of

1 four and under the age of five and] shall admit to [such] the
2 kindergarten school or department any child over the age of five
3 and under the age of six years as of October 1 of that school year
4 who is a resident of the district , but a board of education may, in its
5 discretion, admit any student who turns five after this date if they
6 meet entrance requirements as may be established by the rules and
7 regulations of the board through a board approved policy.

8 b. A kindergarten school or kindergarten department established
9 by a board of education shall provide a full-day kindergarten
10 program no later than the beginning of the 2029-2030 school year;
11 provided, however, that a district not providing a full-day
12 kindergarten program prior to the effective date of
13 P.L. , c. (pending before the Legislature as this bill) may satisfy
14 the requirements of this subsection by entering a sending-receiving
15 relationship with a kindergarten school or kindergarten department
16 established by the board of education of an adjacent school district.
17 The tuition of students attending a kindergarten school or
18 kindergarten department in another district in accordance with a
19 sending-receive agreement shall be determined in accordance with
20 N.J.S.18A:38-19. Attendance at a kindergarten school or
21 kindergarten department shall be free in accordance with the
22 requirements of N.J.S.18A:38-1.

23 (cf: P.L.1996, c.138, s.72)

24
25 ¹[14] 13¹. Section 8 of P.L.2000, c.72 (C.18A:7G-8) is
26 amended to read as follows:

27 8. a. The number of unhoused students shall be calculated as the
28 number of FTE students who are projected to be enrolled in
29 [preschool for children with disabilities, preschool,] kindergarten,
30 grades 1 through 12, and special education services pupil
31 educational programs provided in a district within five years, which
32 are in excess of the functional capacity of the district's current
33 school facilities or the functional capacity of the school facilities
34 which will be available within five years other than the school
35 facilities for which the preliminary eligible costs are determined,
36 based upon the district's long-range facilities plan. The
37 determination of unhoused capacity shall separately consider
38 projected enrollments and functional capacities at the [early
39 childhood and] elementary ([preschool] kindergarten through
40 grade 5), middle (grades 6 through 8), and high school (grades 9
41 through 12) levels. For the purpose of calculating the district's
42 unhoused students, special education services students shall be
43 considered part of the grade level to which the students'
44 chronological age corresponds. In the event that the commissioner
45 approves a school facilities project which involves the construction
46 of a new school facility to replace an existing school facility, which
47 shall accommodate both the unhoused students and the students in

1 the existing school facility, the calculation of the number of
 2 unhoused students shall include the number of students currently
 3 attending the existing facility which is to be replaced.

4 b. Approved area for unhoused students (AU) shall be
 5 determined according to the following formula:

$$6 \quad AU = [(UEC \times SEC) +] (UE \times SE) + (UM \times SM) + (UH \times SH)$$

7 where

8 **[UEC,]** UE, UM, UH are the numbers of unhoused students in
 9 the **[early childhood,]** elementary, middle, and high school
 10 enrollment categories, respectively; and

11 **[SEC,]** SE, SM, SH are the area allowances per FTE student in
 12 **[preschool and]** kindergarten **[, grades 1]** through grade 5, grades
 13 6 through 8, and grades 9 through 12, respectively. Area allowances
 14 shall be determined based on the grade level of a student regardless
 15 of the grade configurations used in the school buildings of the
 16 district.

17 The minimum area allowance per FTE student shall be as
 18 follows:

19 [Preschool] <u>Kindergarten</u> through grade 5	125 sq. ft.
20 Grades 6 through 8	134 sq. ft.
21 Grades 9 through 12	151 sq. ft.

22 The commissioner, in consultation with the State Treasurer and
 23 the Commissioner of Community Affairs, shall adopt regulations
 24 that establish a process for the consideration of special
 25 circumstances, in addition to those provided in section 5 of
 26 P.L.2010, c.72 (C.18A:7G-5), in which the area allowances per FTE
 27 student established pursuant to this subsection may be adjusted.
 28 Any decision made by the commissioner pursuant to those
 29 regulations shall be made in consultation with the State Treasurer
 30 and the Commissioner of Community Affairs.

31 (cf: P.L.2017, c.131, s.18)

32

33 ¹**[15]** 14¹. (New section) The Commissioner of Education shall
 34 adopt, pursuant to the “Administrative Procedure Act,” P.L.1968,
 35 c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), rules and regulations necessary to
 36 effectuate the provisions of this act.

37

38 ¹**[16]** 15¹. This act shall take effect immediately ¹.¹

ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 5717

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 16, 2025

The Assembly Education Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Assembly Bill No. 5717.

As amended, this bill is to be known as the “New Jersey Universal Preschool and Kindergarten Act.”

The amended bill modifies various statutes governing early childhood education in an effort to codify and expand on requirements that the Department of Education has previously established for providing State-funded preschool to build and sustain universal access to high-quality programs.

Preschool Expansion Grants

The amended bill requires the Department of Education (DOE) to provide annual preschool expansion grants, defined as grants expanding free access to high-quality preschool for resident three- and four-year children in districts that do not, at the time of application for a grant, provide State-funded, high-quality, free preschool programs. Pursuant to the amended bill, the department’s preschool expansion grant program is to include certain requirements.

Preschool Education Aid

The amended bill also revises requirements for preschool education aid. The revisions include an update to the formula for determining each district’s allocation of preschool education aid to eliminate the use of District Factor Groups and specify the use of projected FTE enrollment for the upcoming year. The amended bill also requires districts that receive preschool education aid to meet certain criteria concerning partnerships with licensed child care providers and Head Start programs, program planning, and self-assessment.

Preschool Cost-Sharing Pilot Program

The amended bill establishes a three-year pilot program for a methodology for sharing preschool education costs between the State

and participating school districts. A participating district is any district receiving preschool education aid for the first time in the 2025-2026, 2026-2027, or 2027-2028 school years. Under the pilot program, preschool education aid for participating school districts is to be calculated by multiplying the district's district aid percentage by the amount calculated under the preschool education aid formula applicable to districts that received preschool education aid in the 2024-2025 school year. District aid percentage for this purpose is to equal to the greater of the district aid percentage as defined pursuant to the State school construction law or 40 percent.

Universal Preschool Implementation Steering Committee

The amended bill establishes in the Department of Education a Universal Preschool Implementation Steering Committee composed of representatives of various State agencies and the New Jersey Legislature.

Other Early Childhood Education Provisions

The amended bill also:

- requires the DOE, the Department of Children and Families, and the Department of Human Services to maintain and annually update certain information regarding preschool and child care providers on their respective Internet websites;
- requires the DOE, the Department of Children and Families, and the Department of Human Services, in consultation with stakeholders, to annually submit a report to the Legislature on the status of preschool education in the State and the efficacy of the mixed delivery method of preschool education;
- requires numerous State agencies to publish guidance on a variety of topics related to expanding access to high-quality preschool education in areas of greatest need; and
- removes preschool students from the population used to determine approved area for unhoused students for purposes of the DOE's administration of school facilities projects.

Finally, the bill requires each elementary-serving school district in the State to establish a full-day kindergarten program no later than the beginning of the 2029-2030 school year. Attendance at the kindergarten program shall be free. School districts not providing full-day kindergarten by the effective date of the amended bill may satisfy this requirement by entering into a sending-receiving relationship with an adjacent school district.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amended the bill to:

- provide that school districts applying for preschool expansion grants are to demonstrate due diligence to partner with all ready, willing, and able licensed child care providers and Head Start programs in the district's immediate and neighboring communities, in a manner determined by the Commissioner of Education, which is to include documentation of all efforts made by the applicant school district to engage with all licensed child care providers and Head Start programs in the applicant's immediate and neighboring communities;
- stipulate that the Department of Education, the Department of Children and Families, and the Department of Human Services are to maintain on their respective Internet websites a list of all districts offering State-funded preschool for a school year, instead of only districts receiving preschool expansion grants;
- provide that the Department of Education, the Department of Children and Families, and the Department of Human Services are to update the required information on their respective Internet websites in a timely manner after preschool expansion grants are awarded;
- require the report on the efficacy of the mixed delivery method of preschool education to be issued by the Department of Education, the Department of Children and Families, and the Department of Human Services on an annual basis;
- require, rather than permit, the Universal Preschool Implementation Steering Committee to convene one or more local subcommittees to solicit input from local practitioners; and
- make various technical changes to the bill.

ASSEMBLY APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

[First Reprint]

ASSEMBLY, No. 5717

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 19, 2025

The Assembly Appropriations Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Assembly Bill No. 5717 (1R).

As amended, this bill is to be known as the “New Jersey Universal Preschool and Kindergarten Act.”

The amended bill modifies various statutes governing early childhood education in an effort to codify and expand on requirements that the Department of Education has previously established for providing State-funded preschool to build and sustain universal access to high-quality programs.

Preschool Expansion Grants

The amended bill requires the Department of Education (DOE) to provide annual preschool expansion grants, defined as grants expanding free access to high-quality preschool for resident three- and four-year children in districts that do not, at the time of application for a grant, provide State-funded, high-quality, free preschool programs. Pursuant to the amended bill, the department’s preschool expansion grant program is to include certain requirements.

Preschool Education Aid

The amended bill also revises requirements for preschool education aid. The revisions include an update to the formula for determining each district’s allocation of preschool education aid to eliminate the use of District Factor Groups and specify the use of projected FTE enrollment for the upcoming year. The amended bill also requires districts that receive preschool education aid to meet certain criteria concerning partnerships with licensed child care providers and Head Start programs, program planning, and self-assessment.

Preschool Cost-Sharing Pilot Program

The amended bill establishes a three-year pilot program for a methodology of sharing preschool education costs between the State and participating school districts. A participating district is any district receiving preschool education aid for the first time in the 2025-2026, 2026-2027, or 2027-2028 school years. Under the pilot program, preschool education aid for participating school districts is to be calculated by multiplying the district's district aid percentage by the amount calculated under the preschool education aid formula applicable to districts that received preschool education aid in the 2024-2025 school year. District aid percentage for this purpose is to equal to the greater of the district aid percentage as defined pursuant to the State school construction law or 40 percent.

Universal Preschool Implementation Steering Committee

The amended bill establishes in the Department of Education a Universal Preschool Implementation Steering Committee composed of representatives of various State agencies and the New Jersey Legislature.

Other Early Childhood Education Provisions

The amended bill also:

- requires the DOE, the Department of Children and Families, and the Department of Human Services to maintain and annually update certain information regarding preschool and child care providers on their respective Internet websites;
- requires the DOE, the Department of Children and Families, and the Department of Human Services, in consultation with stakeholders, to annually submit a report to the Legislature on the status of preschool education in the State and the efficacy of the mixed delivery method of preschool education;
- requires numerous State agencies to publish guidance on a variety of topics related to expanding access to high-quality preschool education in areas of greatest need; and
- removes preschool students from the population used to determine approved area for unhoused students for school facilities projects.

Finally, the bill requires each elementary-serving school district in the State to establish a full-day kindergarten program no later than the beginning of the 2029-2030 school year. Attendance at the kindergarten program shall be free. School districts not providing full-day kindergarten by the effective date of the amended bill may satisfy this requirement by entering into a sending-receiving relationship with an adjacent school district.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amended the bill to:

- permit a school district applying for a preschool expansion grant to justify its decision not to use a mixed delivery model of preschool education by including evidence that extenuating circumstances in the school district's community limit accessibility to, or feasibility of partnership with, licensed childcare centers and Head Start programs; and
- make a technical correction to a citation in the bill.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Fiscal information for this bill is currently unavailable.

LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ESTIMATE

[Second Reprint]

ASSEMBLY, No. 5717

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

221st LEGISLATURE

DATED: JULY 3, 2025

SUMMARY

- Synopsis:** Makes various changes to provision of preschool aid and facilities requirements; establishes Universal Preschool Implementation Steering Committee; requires full-day kindergarten in all school districts.
- Type of Impact:** Potential State and local cost increases; local revenue increase.
- Agencies Affected:** Department of Education; local school districts.

Office of Legislative Services Estimate

Fiscal Impact	<u>Annual</u>
State Expenditure Increase	Indeterminate
Local Expenditure Increase	Indeterminate and variable by school district
Local Revenue Increase	Indeterminate and variable by school district

- The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) finds that this bill would lead to indeterminate increases in State costs. Some provisions of the bill may result in marginal cost increases for the State and local school districts, to the extent that current resources are not sufficient to effectuate the purposes of the bill.
- The bill requires all school districts to provide for free, full-day kindergarten by the 2029-2030 school year, which would result in both local and State cost increases; however, the magnitude of the cost increase is unknown and would be spread across five years assuming this bill first takes effect in the 2025-2026 school year.
- The bill could also result in indeterminate revenue increases for local school districts that first receive preschool education aid in the 2025-2026, 2026-2027, or 2027-2028 school years because these districts would have the ability to exceed the two percent tax levy growth limitation in order to account for additional preschool costs. The allowable increase would be limited to the actual costs of implementing a preschool program, which would vary

significantly across districts based on the number of students enrolling and the availability of adequate facilities.

- The provisions of the bill that impact the calculation of preschool education aid would result in no cost increase to the State because the bill largely codifies the preschool funding methodology incorporated in the annual appropriations act in recent years.
- Additionally, the requirement that the State provide preschool expansion grants is not guaranteed to increase State costs, unless future appropriations acts increase the amount of funds available for the grants. The annual appropriations act in recent years has included appropriations for preschool expansion grants, and the bill largely codifies budget language governing the program.

BILL DESCRIPTION

The bill modifies various statutes governing early childhood education in an effort to codify and expand on requirements that the Department of Education has previously established for providing State-funded preschool to build and sustain universal access to high-quality programs.

The bill revises requirements for preschool education aid. The revisions include an update to the formula for determining each district's allocation of preschool education aid to eliminate the use of District Factor Groups and specify the use of projected FTE enrollment for the upcoming year.

The bill also requires the department to provide annual preschool expansion grants, defined as grants expanding free access to high-quality preschool for resident three- and four-year old children in districts that do not, at the time of application for a grant, provide State-funded, high-quality, free preschool programs.

Additionally, the bill establishes a three-year pilot program for a methodology for sharing preschool education costs between the State and participating school districts. A participating district is any district receiving preschool education aid for the first time in the 2025-2026, 2026-2027, or 2027-2028 school years. Under the pilot program, preschool education aid for participating school districts is to be calculated by multiplying the district's district aid percentage by the amount calculated under the preschool education aid formula applicable to districts that received preschool education aid in the 2024-2025 school year. District aid percentage for this purpose is to be equal to the greater of the district aid percentage as defined pursuant to the State school construction law or 40 percent.

The bill also establishes in the Department of Education a Universal Preschool Implementation Steering Committee composed of representatives of various State agencies and the New Jersey Legislature and requires numerous State agencies to publish guidance on a variety of topics related to expanding access to high-quality preschool education in areas of greatest need.

Finally, the bill requires each elementary-serving school district in the State to establish a full-day kindergarten program no later than the beginning of the 2029-2030 school year. Attendance at the kindergarten program shall be free. School districts not providing full-day kindergarten by the effective date of the amended bill may satisfy this requirement by entering into a sending-receiving relationship with an adjacent school district.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

None received.

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES

The OLS finds that this bill would lead to indeterminate increases in State costs and local revenues, as described in detail below.

Preschool Education Aid

Under current law, school districts have different levels of requirement to provide free preschool based on the district’s status as a universal preschool district or a targeted preschool district, which is determined by socioeconomic factors and the proportion of at-risk students in the district. The bill eliminates targeted preschool districts and instead provides that, for districts that received preschool education aid in the 2024-2025 school year, preschool education aid would be provided for all preschool aged students enrolled in the district. This change is a codification of policy that has been implemented in recent annual appropriations acts. Consequently, this provision of the bill is not expected to result in any increased State costs.

Preschool Expansion Aid

This bill also includes requirements that the Department of Education provide preschool expansion grants in each year for school districts to expand access to high-quality preschool for resident three- and four-year old children. The cost of these grants is conditional on the amount included in the annual appropriations acts, and the bill does not stipulate any requirements for determining the amounts, or increasing or decreasing the appropriation in successive years. For the purposes of illustration, the table below shows the portion of preschool education aid dedicated to preschool expansion grants in recent appropriations acts.

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Preschool Expansion Grants</u>
2020	\$20,000,000
2021	\$10,000,000
2022	\$26,000,000
2023	\$40,000,000
2024	\$40,000,000
2025	\$20,000,000
2026 (Proposed)	\$10,000,000

Cost-Sharing Pilot Program

The bill establishes a pilot program in which school districts first receiving preschool education aid in the 2025-2026, 2026-2027, or 2027-2028 school years would receive a percentage of the amount of preschool education aid calculated for the district and be responsible for supporting the remaining costs with local funds. In order to do so, school districts would be permitted to increase their general fund tax levies beyond the two percent tax levy growth limitation, but only by the

amount of actual preschool costs less the amount of preschool education aid received. The OLS is unable to estimate the magnitude of this revenue increase for school districts because actual costs vary across districts and the districts that may receive preschool education aid for the first time have not yet been identified. However, for the purposes of illustration, the OLS notes that the average school district spends \$8,065 per preschool pupil and average enrollment in the first year of receiving preschool education aid is 17 students. Based on these numbers, the average first year costs for preschool programs is \$137,105.

In addition to the local revenue increase, the pilot program would decrease State costs by requiring the State to provide only a percentage of preschool education aid to participating districts. The magnitude of the savings is unknown, as the percentage for which the State is responsible is not static and depends on the district.

Full-Day Kindergarten

The OLS finds that the provision of the bill that requires all school districts to provide for free full-day kindergarten by the 2029-2030 school year would result in indeterminate cost increases for the State and local school districts. As of the 2024-2025 school year, only 10 school districts do not provide free full-day kindergarten, some of which have taken steps to begin implementing full-day kindergarten. The cost of implementing free full-day kindergarten differs substantially based on the districts. The most substantial cost appears to be obtaining adequate facilities, either through renovations or new construction, or the purchase or lease of buildings. Several districts have conducted bond referendums to obtain funds for facilities needs in order to implement full-day kindergarten. For the purposes of illustration, the table below details some of the estimates provided in these referendums.

School District	2024-2025 Half-Day Kindergarten Enrollment	Referendum Details
Westfield Public Schools	184	The district has estimated that \$37.2 million would be needed to address facilities needs associated with implementing full-day kindergarten.
Cranford Public School District	224	The district estimated \$75.0 million was needed for facilities improvements across the district, including renovations to accommodate full-day kindergarten.
Moorestown Township Public School District	243	The district proposed a referendum for \$112.6 million for district-wide facilities needs, of which \$17.1 million is intended for elementary schools in the district. The projects included in the cost for elementary school needs include renovations for kindergarten classrooms.
Haddonfield School District	149	The district passed a referendum for \$46.7 million for district-wide facilities needs. The project estimate for all renovations at the school providing kindergarten is \$3.8 million, including the addition of three new classrooms.

In addition to facilities needs, implementing free full-day kindergarten would likely result in districts hiring additional staff. The cost of this would be dependent on the number of students enrolled in the district and the ratio of students to staff. While these needs would increase local costs, school districts would also receive increased State aid for students enrolled in full-day

kindergarten compared to half-day kindergarten. The total amount of additional State aid is unknown because it would depend on each district’s local share. The table below shows estimates from some school districts for the operational cost of implementing full-day kindergarten.

School District	2024-2025 Half-Day Kindergarten Enrollment	Estimated Operational Needs
Millstone Township School District	95	\$500,000
Westfield Public Schools	184	\$3.5 million
Cranford Public School District	224	\$1.3 million

It should also be noted that the bill requires school districts to implement free full-day kindergarten by the 2029-2030 school year, which means that cost increases to the State could be spread out across multiple fiscal years depending on when each of the districts began implementing full-day kindergarten.

Miscellaneous Costs

There may be other costs associated with the bill which would likely be marginal and dependent on existing resources.

The bill requires school districts that receive preschool education aid to submit annual program plans detailing the status of the district’s preschool program and participate in a system of self-assessment that includes a visit by a State team once every three years. This may result in additional local costs to the extent that these plans and assessments are not already conducted by local school districts and would require additional resources to do so. The visits by State teams may also increase State costs to the extent that these visits are conducted separately from other State assessment processes.

The bill also establishes the Universal Preschool Implementation Steering Committee to evaluate and make recommendations concerning preschool funding and preschool requirements. There may be marginal costs for the State associated with convening local subcommittees to solicit input from local providers and compiling recommendations for the Governor and the Legislature.

Additionally, the bill requires the Department of Education, in consultation with the Department of Children and Families, to develop and periodically update a Mixed Delivery Model Preschool Handbook. There may be marginal costs for the State associated with the compilation of this handbook to the extent that existing resources are not sufficient to effectuate the provisions of the bill.

Section: Education
Analyst: Abigail Chambers
Senior Fiscal Analyst
Approved: Thomas Koenig
Legislative Budget and Finance Officer

This legislative fiscal estimate has been produced by the Office of Legislative Services due to the failure of the Executive Branch to respond to our request for a fiscal note.

This fiscal estimate has been prepared pursuant to P.L.1980, c.67 (C.52:13B-6 et seq.).

Governor Murphy Signs Legislation to Expand Access to Early Childhood Education

Posted on - 07/9/2025

Legislation Puts New Jersey on Track to Universal Preschool and Full-Day Kindergarten

PLAINFIELD – Governor Phil Murphy today signed three bills to bolster early childhood education in New Jersey, building on a multi-year, administration-wide effort to expand access to free, high-quality preschool and full-day kindergarten programs. Together, these bills will help ensure children in New Jersey can enjoy a strong foundation upon which to build their educational careers.

Since the beginning of his Administration, Governor Murphy has made it a priority to set New Jersey firmly on course to universal, free preschool in all school districts. Over the past seven years, funding for public preschool has increased by nearly \$600 million, with New Jersey currently spending \$1.2 billion to stand up and sustain programs in communities across the state. Since year one of the Administration, 229 districts have been added to State-funded preschool programs; meaning now, over half of New Jersey's elementary-serving school districts offer free, high-quality preschool, whether through strong mixed-delivery partnerships with childcare providers or in elementary schools.

"With today's bill signing, we are moving forward in making free, universal preschool and free, full-day kindergarten a reality in every corner of our state. We know that access to high-quality early education programs is critical for our children and that it can set the tone for the rest of their academic careers. It is in these settings that our children begin to foster literacy skills and engage in social and emotional development, both of which can positively impact their lives," **said Governor Murphy**. "Expanding access to high-quality early childhood education has been the cornerstone of my Administration's approach to setting our children on a path to lifelong success. We have already seen remarkable success in bringing State-funded preschool to hundreds of New Jersey communities, and today's action will ensure this trajectory continues so that New Jersey remains the best place in the nation to raise a family."

"Today's bill signing cements New Jersey's national leadership in providing exceptional preschool education," **said Department of Education Commissioner Kevin Dehmer**. "By prioritizing access for low-income students, fostering collaboration with community partners, and ensuring all students have access to full-day kindergarten, these bills codify the Administration's longstanding efforts to expand preschool access and strengthen our state's commitment to early childhood education. This step marks an important milestone in advancing New Jersey's dedication to families and the long-term success of our youngest learners."

"Quality childcare is a critical tool for working families," **said Department of Children and Families Commissioner Christine Norbut Beyer**. "These new laws prioritize the interests of children and their families by securing the

state's vital child care provider network, while expanding access and options for pre-K services now, and into the future."

"Every child deserves a strong start, and these bills reflect New Jersey's commitment to making high-quality early education more accessible, transparent, and equitable. By centralizing information on preschool opportunities, we are strengthening the foundation of the early childhood system. A robust mixed-delivery system that includes public schools, child care centers, and community-based providers is essential to meeting the diverse needs of families," **said Department of Human Services Commissioner Sarah Adelman**. "Human Services is ready to play a role in building a more coordinated, inclusive early childhood system that works for families, providers, and communities across the state."

The first bill – [S3910/A5717](#) – codifies New Jersey's preschool funding formula into statute. It also modifies various statutes governing early childhood education to help build and sustain universal access to high-quality, State-funded preschool programs.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- Requiring the DOE to provide annual preschool expansion grants;
- Codifying and revising the requirements for preschool education aid;
- Establishing a three-year Preschool Cost-Sharing Pilot Program;
- Establishing a Universal Preschool Implementation Steering Committee, which will be composed of representatives of various State agencies and the New Jersey Legislature;
- Requiring the DOE, the Department of Children and Families (DCF), and the Department of Human Services (DHS) to maintain and annually update certain information regarding preschool and child care providers on their respective websites;
- Requiring the DOE, the DCF, and the DHS to annually submit a report to the Legislature on the status of preschool education in the state and the efficacy of the mixed-delivery method of preschool education; and
- Requiring State agencies to publish guidance on a variety of topics related to expanding access to high-quality preschool education in areas of greatest need.

The bill also sets the State firmly on course to provide free, full-day kindergarten for all New Jersey families by 2030 by requiring each elementary-serving school district in the state to establish a full-day kindergarten program no later than the beginning of the 2029-2030 school year. Attendance at the kindergarten program will be free. School districts not providing full-day kindergarten by the effective date of the bill may satisfy this requirement by entering into a send-receive relationship with an adjacent school district.

Sponsors of the legislation include Senators Teresa Ruiz and Shirley Turner, along with Assemblymembers Andrea Katz and Sterley Stanley.

"Every student in New Jersey deserves a fair start, and every family deserves the peace of mind that comes with knowing their child has access to quality care and early education," **said Assembly Speaker Craig J. Coughlin**. "These bills move us closer to making universal preschool and full-day kindergarten a reality in every corner of our state. By giving districts the tools and flexibility they need to meet families where they are, we're delivering the kind of early learning opportunities that will set our students up for success."

"A child's earliest years are when curiosity blooms and the foundation for lifelong learning is built. But today, with child care costs soaring to the level of college tuition, too many families are being forced to choose between their child's potential and their household budget. Expanding access to affordable preschool and

kindergarten isn't just good policy — it's a smart investment in our state's future," **said Majority Leader M. Teresa Ruiz**. "The 'New Jersey Universal Preschool and Kindergarten Act' is a major step forward, setting clear standards, increasing state support, and ensuring that more children have the chance to start strong. By prioritizing early learning, we're giving working families the tools they need to thrive and unlocking the full potential of the next generation."

"With the New Jersey Universal Preschool and Kindergarten Act now enacted, the State is taking a firm stand that access to early education is a right, not a privilege," **said Senator Shirley Turner**. "This law is a powerful step toward equity, ensuring that every child, regardless of their background, starts school with the strong foundation they need to succeed. We are no longer waiting to close opportunity gaps. We are preventing them from the start. This is how we begin to build a fairer and stronger New Jersey."

"Pre-K is one of the best things we can offer — it gives kids a head start on learning important skills and gives families access to quality, free child care," **said Assemblywoman Andrea Katz**. "As a mom, I know how much this matters for families like mine. With this investment, New Jersey is reaffirming its commitment to giving every child the opportunity to reach their full potential."

"New Jersey's children deserve free, top-tier preschools that lay a strong academic foundation and set them up for future success, especially for economically disadvantaged children and multilingual learners," **said Assemblyman Sterley Stanley**. "I am grateful for today's bill signing because this legislation will give our children the advantage of early learning, stronger communication and social skills that will result in meaningful connections."

The second bill — [S4476/A5780](#) — permits the awarding of contracts for certain preschool education services by resolution of a board of education and extends the maximum contract length for preschools to three years.

Sponsors of S4476/A5780 include Senators Teresa Ruiz and Vin Gopal, along with Assemblymembers Verlina Reynolds-Jackson, Linda Carter, and Carmen Theresa Morales.

"Reducing red tape and extending contract terms for private preschool providers will empower more childcare centers to grow their operations and reach more families," **said Senator Vin Gopal**. "These changes will strengthen our mixed-delivery early education system and help ensure more children across New Jersey have access to high-quality preschool."

"Preschool education is one of the best investments we can make, but only if districts have the tools to deliver it," **said Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson, Chair of the Assembly Education Committee**. "This bill cuts unnecessary red tape and lets school boards work directly with trusted providers to reach more children, more quickly. It's about equity, access, and making sure no child is left behind before they even start kindergarten."

"Through this legislation, we're making it easier for school districts to provide high-quality preschool options to families," **said Assemblywoman Linda Carter**. "By streamlining the contracting process and allowing longer agreements, we're helping schools meet the growing demand, reducing administrative delays, and supporting children in their earliest years."

"As an educator, I've seen firsthand how important stability and strong partnerships are in keeping classrooms fully staffed and running smoothly," **said Assemblywoman Carmen Theresa Morales**. "It's a commonsense

change that not only supports long-term planning for school districts but also prioritizes better outcomes for our state's youngest minds."

The third bill – [A5908/S4695](#) – amends the Fiscal Year 2026 Appropriations Act to revise various language provisions concerning Preschool Education Aid to align that language with legislation (S3910/A5717) that modifies the allocation of Preschool Education Aid.

Sponsors of A5908/S4695 include Assemblywoman Eliana Pintor Marin and Senator Teresa Ruiz.

"Expanding access to high-quality preschool is an important step toward equity for working families," **said Assemblywoman Eliana Pintor Marin**. "As childcare costs continue to rise, this bill helps make sure families across New Jersey can find affordable early education. It's about building a system that supports parents and prepares every child for success."

"Expanding access to high-quality early childhood education is one of the most powerful investments we can make in our children's future. I fully support the signing of Bills S3910/A5717 and S4476/A5780, which represent a historic step forward in ensuring that every child in New Jersey has access to the strong educational foundation they deserve," **said Silvia Pereira, AFT New Jersey's Executive Vice President for PreK-12**. "By codifying funding for pre-K, mandating full-day kindergarten, and streamlining the delivery of preschool services, this legislation affirms our collective commitment to equity, opportunity, and lifelong learning."

"The New Jersey Association of School Administrators (NJASA) applauds the passage of a landmark legislative package that marks a pivotal moment for early childhood education in New Jersey. This is a strategic and comprehensive victory for our children, our families, and our communities," **said Dr. Richard Bozza, Executive Director of the New Jersey Association of School Administrators**.

"Allowing school districts and community childcare providers to enter into three-year contracts provides much-needed stability for community providers," **said Winifred Smith-Jenkins, Director of Early Childhood Policy and Advocacy at Advocates for Children of New Jersey**. "ACNJ appreciates the support of Governor Murphy and the New Jersey Legislature in advancing this important step toward a stronger mixed-delivery preschool system."

"We believe that high-quality pre-school education is one of the best investments in long-term student success. The two bills being signed today bring us ever closer to realizing that goal," **said Elizabeth "Betsy" Ginsburg, Executive Director, Garden State Coalition of Schools**.

"The right to a free and appropriate public education in this country is among the greatest assets to the children of today and the adults of tomorrow. Our students' opportunities and ultimate success are much brighter when access to that education begins as early as possible," **said Karen A. Bingert, Executive Director, New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association**. "The New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association commends Senator Ruiz, Assemblywoman Katz, the many legislative co-sponsors of these bills, and Governor Murphy in signing them into law so that our youngest learners' rights to pre-K and kindergarten are forever protected, districts are supported, and partnerships in early childhood education are promoted in our state."

"Our association is thrilled to back this unprecedented legislation that demonstrates New Jersey's long-term commitment to expanding access to early child education. It's the right thing to do for the youngest children in New Jersey's public schools. Beyond their preschool and kindergarten years, this investment in programs and

facilities will establish a firm foundation for ongoing success in school and careers. We also are aware that school districts will need solid financial support to continue providing high-quality early childhood programs and look forward to working with all stakeholders to give them the resources they will require,” **said Dr. Timothy J. Purnell, NJSBA Executive Director and CEO.** “In particular, we would like to thank Governor Murphy, Majority Leader Ruiz, Assemblywoman Katz, Assemblywoman Reynolds-Jackson, Speaker Coughlin, Senate President Scutari and Commissioner Dehmer for their leadership and collaboration on this critical issue.”

“Access to full-day kindergarten and diverse early education options are a game-changer for families — it lays a strong foundation for academic success, boosts social and emotional development, and gives every child a fair start. The evidence is clear: when we invest in our youngest learners, we invest in a brighter future for all New Jerseyans,” **said Colleen Eskow, Chief Policy Officer, NJ Children's Foundation.**

“New Jersey continues to be a leader in public pre-k delivery through the passage of these essential bills. We thank the Governor and the Legislature for encouraging mixed delivery pre-k and prioritizing greater access for families across the state,” **said Nazbi Chowdhury, Government Relations Representative for KinderCare Learning Companies.**

“S3910/A5717 and S4476/A5780 acknowledge the key role of community-based providers in the State’s preschool program and will help facilitate mixed delivery partnerships that will expand preschool options for New Jersey families,” **said Elsa Jacobsen, Director of State Government Relations for the Early Care & Education Consortium.** “We look forward to working with the Administration and the Legislature to continue to build on the progress that has been made to advance these partnerships in the weeks and months ahead.”

“The New Jersey Association of School Business Officials (NJASBO) applauds the Governor for signing into law two critical pieces of legislation that will significantly enhance early childhood education in our state. The codification of preschool funding helps to ensure that our youngest learners have access to high quality early education services. Additionally, the legislation provides much-needed flexibility and stability for our preschool programs,” **said Susan Young, Executive Director, New Jersey Association of School Business Officials.** “We believe that these measures will have a lasting positive impact on the educational outcomes of children across New Jersey.”

“Investing in high-quality public preschool is good for New Jersey’s children, families, and economy,” **said Dr. W. Steven Barnett, Founder and Senior Director of the National Institute for Early Education Research.** “New Jersey has one of the strongest preschool programs in the country, with strong evidence that it produces the results promised by decades of research on high-quality early education—improved education outcomes, increased productivity and career success, and better health. This legislation helps ensure that New Jersey’s education system continues to be the best in the nation and our economy will reap the benefits.”

“Learning Ally is proud to support S3910/A5717 and S4476/A5780. Expanding access to high-quality early education, ensuring equitable learning opportunities from an early age, and providing the consistency and foundation needed for long-term academic and personal success will empower students across the state. At Learning Ally, we are committed to supporting students in Pre-K and beyond through our human-read audiobooks that help students of all abilities build confidence, engage in learning, and achieve their full potential,” **said Learning Ally in a statement.**

“JerseyCAN welcomes the passage of S3910/A5717 and S4476/A5780, regarding the long-term viability of pre-K, and Kindergarten. As we prepare for a new school year, we recall the sobering reality that in the past, our

state's Kindergarten curriculum warranted significant improvement in order for students to receive the best evidence-based literacy instruction from day one. With new improvements in kindergarten literacy instruction set to be implemented in the 2025-2026 school year Kindergarten will be more impactful than ever before. By securing long-term funding for pre-K, mandating full-day kindergarten by 2030, and empowering school boards to expand preschool services, New Jersey is advancing JerseyCAN's central goal - access to a high quality education for every child," **said Paula White, Executive Director of JerseyCAN.**

Assemblywomen Donlon and Peterpaul Announce 13 Bills Signed Into Law This Summer

TINTON FALLS - The Governor signed 13 of Assemblywoman Margie Donlon and Assemblywoman Luanne Peterpaul's bills into law this summer.

Either Assemblywoman Donlon or Assemblywoman Peterpaul, or both, and Senator Vin Gopal, (D-Monmouth) were the prime sponsors of four of the bills and cosponsors of the remaining nine.

"Many of these bills support small businesses and protect consumers. They reflect the concerns that Legislative District 11 residents tell us are important to them, such as utility costs, as we travel around the district talking to businesses and residents," said Assemblywoman Peterpaul.



The bills on which the Assemblywomen were primary sponsors include A5768, which requires the BPU to revise community solar program targets and directs the agency to open registration by October 1, 2025 for an additional 3,000 megawatts of community solar projects. Senator Gopal was a primary sponsor of the Senate version. Another of their bills, A5141, establishes an historic distillery license to allow the manufacturing and consumption of distilled alcoholic beverages on-and-off premises under certain circumstances by a licensee on the NJ Register of Historic Places. Senator Gopal also was a primary sponsor.

"Our sponsored bills also address healthcare concerns, which are a top priority for the LD11 office, and ensure healthcare insurance is more accessible and affordable," said Donlon, who is a physician and primary sponsor of A5810, which promotes equity in the health insurance appeal process. "This bill eliminates fees for appeals against health insurance carriers that deny, reduce, or terminate benefits."

Assemblywoman Donlon and Senator Gopal also were primary sponsors of A5199, a new law that requires eligible resident and fellow physicians employed by Rutgers University, including University Hospital, and their dependents, receive coverage in the State Health Benefits Plan (SHBP) on the first day of employment.

"This legislation corrects a situation that resulted in these healthcare professionals working in hospital environments, where they are exposed to diseases, infections and other dangers, but didn't have health coverage for a period of time," Gopal said.

The LD11 legislators also cosponsored nine other bills that became the law since June 30 of this year. These bills include:

[A5792](#) - Provides for workers' compensation coverage of certain counseling services for first responders and ensures that mental health-related communications are confidential.

[A5687](#) - Establishes the "Next New Jersey Manufacturing Program" to incentivize in-state manufacturing investments and job creation.

[A5466](#) - Requires the BPU to study the effects of data centers on electricity costs.

[A5463](#) - Requires electric public utilities to submit an annual report on voting to the BPU.

[A5447](#) - Prohibits the sweepstakes model of wagering; establishes new penalties for unlawful gambling operations and practices; directs Division of Consumer Affairs and Division of Gaming Enforcement to enforce penalties.

[S4567](#) - Appropriates \$107,999,000 from constitutionally dedicated Corporate Business Tax revenues and various Green Acres funds to the DEP to make grants to local governments for open space acquisition, park development, and planning projects.

[S4476](#) - Permits awarding of contracts for certain preschool education services by resolution of the board of education; extends the maximum length of preschool education services contracts to three years. Senator Gopal was a primary sponsor in the Senate.

[S3910](#) - Makes various changes to the provision of preschool aid and facilities requirements; establishes Universal Preschool Implementation Steering Committee; requires full-day kindergarten in all school districts.

[S3711](#) - Makes annual allocations of \$500,000 from the Clean Communities Program Fund for public outreach concerning single-use plastics reduction programs permanent.