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HOUSE REPUBLICAN STAFF ANALYSIS

Bill: House File 535
Committee: Education
Bill Manager: Rep. Forristall
Date: March 7, 2011
Staff: Jason Chapman (1-3015)

State Preschool Program

(Formerly HSB 145) This bill establishes a new preschool program for the state based on a sliding scale of need up to 300% of poverty. For a family of 4, this is \$67,000. The state will fund a portion of the preschool tuition, while the parent will also contribute a portion based on the level of poverty. The family will have the choice of preschool program that qualifies as “high-quality” which means meeting the standards of NAEYC, Head Start, or Iowa’s QPPS.

Districts are in charge of the funding stream and shall help the department identify all eligible programs in their district, private and public. Those programs shall be listed on the department’s website, searchable by zip code. A parent may choose the preschool of their choice that qualifies.

The department will develop an assessment to be used to track student program to determine the success of the participating programs. Qualified teachers are required to have a bachelors degree and an early childhood certificate from the Board of Ed Examiners. There is a phase-in period on this to allow current teachers to work up towards this.

Funding is funneled through districts and districts may keep up to 5% for administrative costs. The funding is established through an annual appropriation and is distributed based on a scale funding formula to be established by the department. Parents contributing to their child’s tuition will pay the provider directly for their share.

Summary of Action

The House **PASSED** HF 535 on March 8, 2011, by a vote of 55-45.
The bill **DIED** in Senate subcommittee on March 10, 2011.

Section by Section Analysis

Division I

Section 1 – 8 This division repeals the current Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program (SWVPP) Code section 256c and changes other code references from 256c to 256j, the new code section for the state's preschool program

Division II

Creates a new section in code, 256J – Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children

Section 9 Definitions

Section 10 Establishes the Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children, provides intent language stating that the program is for providing scholarships to economically disadvantaged children. Gives the state board rule making authority for this chapter.

Section 11 Preschool Program Requirements

- 1) Eligible Children –
resident of Iowa, age four on or before September 15th of the school year. Eligibility Based on sliding tuition scale.
 - a) Family may choose district or private preschool and shall complete all enrollment requirements, including income verification
 - b) Preschool may charge tuition, but not more than amount determined by department. All families must pay some tuition, as determined on the sliding scale put together by DE
- 2) Teacher Requirements
 - a) Teachers shall be employed by or under contract with district or private preschool provider
 - (1) Appropriately licensed by Board of Ed Examiners and meet requirements of Teacher Performance chapter
or
 - (2) Possesses or be working towards an Early Childhood Certificate and meets either of the following:
 - (a) Has bachelors or graduate degree from accredited university
 - (b) Has associates and is working towards a bachelors degree within three years. This option is repealed August 31, 2014.
 - b) Teacher must collaborate with other entities providing services for early childhood
- 3) Program Requirements
Gives state board of ed rule-making authority to define the program requirements including:
 - a) teacher-to-child ratios,
 - b) applicable state and federal standards,
 - c) student learning standards,
 - d) comprehensive assessment to be determined by the department,
 - e) integration of children from other state and federal preschool programs,
 - f) collaboration with ECI and others,
 - g) minimum 10 hours per week, 34 weeks per year
 - h) family involvement
 - i) provisions for wrap-around services
- 4) School District Requirements

- State board adopts rules for school districts implementing a preschool program that shall include:
- a) Readiness of district and private programs to meet preschool program requirements. The district is required to contact all preschools in the district, private and public.
 - b) Collaborate with all preschool programs in the district that meet the preschool programs requirements, private and public, in the following ways:
 - (1) Extend the day with other available state and federal dollars, if possible
 - (2) Promote Family Support Programs
 - c) Participate in data and assessment collection of student performance
 - d) Identify all eligible children in the district with help of ECI board
 - e) Collect information and verify family income for sliding tuition scale
 - f) Address professional development for preschool teachers
 - g) Collaborate with private preschool providers on professional development
 - h) Provide funds to private preschool providers as verified
- 5) Department Requirements
- a) Develop application and approval process for preschool providers
 - b) Track performance of all preschoolers in the program, private and public and continue that tracking through elementary and secondary ed
 - c) Monitor quality of preschool providers programs, public and private
 - d) Establish an assessment
 - e) Submit annual report to governor, general assembly, ECI state board, and child development coordinating council
 - (1) ECI and council will collaborate with the DE on high-quality programs, ECI will promote the program to increase awareness, and ECI shall work with the districts to strengthen private and public preschool programs
 - f) Develop and publish on the DE website a list of all participating preschool providers, public and private
 - g) Develop and review annually a sliding tuition scale at or below 300% of the poverty level
- 6) States that a preschool program put on by a religious entity shall not be prohibited from the free exercise of religion during the program's hours of instruction if the program meets the program requirements established by the new preschool program.

Section 12 Funding Provisions

1) General Funding

- a) Funding for the program is based on the formula sliding scale developed by the department and an annual appropriation by the legislature.
- b) Funds from 298A may be used by the district for the preschool program, if the uses are within the uses permitted and the use of the funds for preschool purposes has been approved. 298A funds are the management levy, PPEL funds, schoolhouse tax levy, PERL fund, library levy, student activity fund, capital projects fund, deb service fund, school nutrition fund, child care fund, and other funds as established by the district.
- c) Funding for this program must supplement, not supplant existing public funding for preschool.
- d) Funding under this chapter shall not be comingled with other funds and shall be accounted for separately. School districts are required to certify to the department that the funding received was used to supplement, not supplant.
- e) Cannot be used for construction of a facility.

- f) Parent's contribution is to be used in conjunction with state money to support the program. Not more than 5% of the state funding received annually may be used by the district for supervision of the program.
- 2) Eligible Student Enrollment
 - a) To be included in enrollment, students must meet requirements and be enrolled.
 - b) Enrollment count for each district shall include all eligible children enrolled in and attending.

Section 13 State Fund Allocation

- 1) State funding
 - a) Sets the allocation formula for preschool funding.
 - b) The department of education collects any unused money at the October 1 enrollment count date and redistributes remaining funds to other districts who need it.
 - c) Funding in this chapter shall be used only for purposes set forth in this chapter.
- 2) If the district has no preschool programs in the district, private or public, they will not receive funding.
- 3) To continue being a part of the program school districts must continue to meet the requirements of this chapter. The department will conduct onsite reviews.
- 4) If funding for this chapter is insufficient, the funding shall be based on a fair distribution of the total allocation.
- 5) Payments to private partners shall be made monthly upon submission and verification of the actual instructional costs incurred.
- 6) The department may add up to 4 FTEs to carry out the provisions and oversight of this chapter.
- 7) Open enrollment is not applicable to this preschool program, however approved programs shall be open to all eligible children, regardless of a child's district of residence.
- 8) This program does not count as "good cause" as defined in the open enrollment chapter for purposes of enrolling in a school district other than their district of residence.

Section 14 Requires the Board of Educational Examiners to develop an early childhood certificate. The certificate requires 12 hours of coursework from an accredited institution of higher learning in several different early childhood disciplines.
