

HB 973 -- EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

SPONSOR: Shields

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Emerging Issues by a vote of 11 to 0.

Beginning with the 2021-2022 school year, this bill will change the total number of qualifying pupils, defined as ages three through five, and eligible for free or reduced price lunch, that are included in the calculation of average daily attendance. Currently that number shall not exceed 4% of the total number of non-qualifying pupils ages five through 18 who are eligible for free and reduced price lunch and who are included in the calculation of average daily attendance.

For the 2022-2023 school year, the percentage increases to 6%.

For the 2023-2024 school year, the percentage increases to 8%.

For the 2025-2026 school year, and for each school year thereafter, the percentage shall be 10%.

The bill expands the definition of "eligible program" to include early childhood programs in full-day kindergarten districts or a recognized local education agency charter school, or a contracted entity.

This bill is similar to SB 931 (2020).

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that the bill provides lunches to additional economically-disadvantaged students. Giving students access to food will save the state money long term. The bill especially helps smaller districts and families who may not qualify for nutrition assistance but otherwise cannot cover prekindergarten expenses.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Shields; Anne Miller, KC Pre-K Cooperative; Douglas Thaman, Missouri Charter Public School Association; Jovanna Rohs, Mid-America Regional Council; Kids Win Missouri; Aligned; and the Department Of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Arnie Dienoff provided written testimony against the bill.

Written testimony has been submitted for this bill. The full written testimony can be found under Testimony on the bill page on the House website.