

HB 1486 -- STATE FUNDING FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMS

SPONSOR: Shields

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education by a vote of 10 to 6. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules- Legislative Oversight by a vote of 6 to 3.

Currently, children between three and five years old who are eligible for free and reduced price lunch and attend an early childhood education program operated by a school district or a charter school may be included in such district's or charter school's calculation of average daily attendance. The total number of such pupils shall not exceed 4% of the total number of pupils between five and 18 years old who are eligible for free and reduced price lunch and who are included in such district's or charter school's calculation of average daily attendance.

Beginning with the 2024-25 school year, this bill provides that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) shall remit to school districts and charter schools an amount equal to the product of the state adequacy target, the dollar-value modifier, and the average daily attendance of pupils who are eligible for free and reduced price lunch and who attend, in the year prior to their kindergarten enrollment eligibility, an early childhood education program that is operated by a school district or a charter school.

Three-year-old pupils and other pupils who are more than one year prior to kindergarten enrollment eligibility, who are eligible for free and reduced price lunch, and who attend such early childhood education programs shall be included in a district's or charter school's calculation of average daily attendance under existing law, although such increases will not disqualify districts from specific funding sources outlined in the bill.

This bill is similar to HB 833 (2023).

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that early childhood education is vital to improving the overall educational quality for the State. Economic impact of early childhood education provides a return of investment that is significant and directly relates to a reduction in future crime prevention measures. Missouri currently has several regions of the State that are experiencing a shortage of early childcare providers and this bill would provide funding to expand the availability of current early childhood programs to positively impact these regions.

Testifying in person for the bill were Representative Shields; Aligned; Missouri Chapter American Academy of Pediatrics; Missouri State Teachers Association; Kids Win Missouri; Jack Gamble, Missouri Alliance of YMCAs; The Opportunity Trust; Missouri NEA; Missouri Council of School Administrators; Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry; North Kansas City Schools; Kari Monsees, Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Quality Schools Coalition; Coop School Districts of Greater Kansas City; and the Missouri School Boards' Association.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that additional support for early childhood education creates a situation that has children relying on the government from the cradle to grave and violates principles of the free market economy. Schools being provided additional resources without having to follow the same regulations as a private independent daycare is also problematic.

Testifying in person against the bill were Liberty Link Missouri and Armorvine.

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