

Date of Hearing: May 7, 2014

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Mike Gatto, Chair

AB 1444 (Buchanan) – As Amended: April 22, 2014

Policy Committee: Education

Vote: 6-1

Urgency: No State Mandated Local Program: Yes

Reimbursable: Yes

SUMMARY

This bill, starting in the 2016-17 school year, requires a child to complete one year of kindergarten before he or she may be admitted to first grade.

FISCAL EFFECT

The California Department of Education (CDE) estimates that approximately 28,000 students were not enrolled in kindergarten or any grade in 2010-11. These students did not attend kindergarten and instead went straight into 1st grade upon enrollment in school. CDE does not track data on private schools therefore it is not known how many of the 28,000 children attended private kindergarten and would meet the requirements of the bill.

CDE estimates a per ADA rate of \$8,221 in 2016-17 for kindergarten. This rate assumes: 16% of the total LCFE grant at full implementation is allocated to concentration and supplemental grants, an average annual COLA of 2%, and about 88% of the target towards full implementation of the Local Control Funding Formula would be funded by 2016-17.

For illustration, assuming 15,000 students start school not having completed one year of kindergarten, using an ADA rate of \$8,221, the state would incur ongoing GF/Proposition 98 costs of approximately \$123.3 million.

COMMENTS:

- 1) Purpose. Research supports the importance of early childhood education. Supporters of the bill, including the California Teachers Association, note that the new Common Core State Standards have academic expectations for kindergarten students. If children do not attend kindergarten, they begin first grade behind and may finish high school behind. The author contends this bill ensures all children begin first grade with the foundation for future success, while providing parents the flexibility to determine when the child is developmentally ready for kindergarten.
- 2) Background. Under current law, compulsory education begins at age 6 until age 18. Any person subject to compulsory education found away from home without a valid excuse for not attending school can be arrested by school officials or peace or probation officers. Current law does not require a child to attend kindergarten but requires school districts to admit a pupil for kindergarten if a parent wishes to enroll a child as long as the child will be five-years-old by September 1 for the 2014-15 school year and every year thereafter.

- 3) An extra year of school for an older cohort of pupils. Current law requires a child be admitted to the first grade of an elementary school as long as the child will be six-years-old by September 1 for the 2014-15 school year and every year thereafter. This bill changes this requirement to now only admit the child to first grade if they have completed one year of kindergarten. As a result, the bill could mean districts would need to provide an additional year of school to an older cohort of children.
- 4) Previous legislation. AB 1772 (Buchanan), held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee Suspense File in 2012, was identical to this bill.

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