



PURPOSE

Assembly Bill 555 seeks to increase access and expand opportunities for children in the California State Preschool Program (CSPP) by removing barriers that programs face in serving three-year olds.

BACKGROUND

In 2021–22, California only served 8.5 percent of the over 300,000 eligible three-year-olds in the CSPP. Increasing access to three-year olds is essential as research indicates high-quality early education is especially effective in reducing the opportunity gap for Black and Hispanic children, as well as other historically marginalized learners. Impacts are particularly strong when children receive two years of high-quality prekindergarten.

Current law includes barriers for CSPP serving three-year-olds, including:

- Requirements to prioritize the enrollment of four-year-olds before three-year-olds.
- Programs receive more additional funding to serve four-year-olds who need extra support than they receive for three-year-olds who have those same characteristics.
- Local Education Authorities (LEAs) have additional licensing requirements for serving three-year-olds that do not apply to serving four-year-olds, which duplicate existing school safety and CSPP regulations.

Current law also limits CSPP programs' ability to serve children that require multiple additional supports, restricting funding to one type of support, and further restricting part-day CSPP from receiving any funding to support dual language learners and children who are at-risk.

Finally, CSPP has historically been funded based on attendance instead of enrollment.

Funding based on enrollment will align with Head Start and the private-pay market, address programs' fixed costs, and help stabilize programs as they recover from the pandemic and transition to serving more three-year-olds.

EXISTING LAW

Sections 8210 and 8211 of the Education Code outlines the priority framework for CSPP.

Sections 8242 and 8244 of the Education Code establish the reimbursement rates for CSPP.

Section 1596.7925 of the Health and Safety Code establishes the health and safety requirements for CSPP to qualify for license exemptions.

SOLUTION

AB 555 will remove barriers to serving three-year olds by (1) prioritizing three-year-olds as the same priority as four-year-olds, lowest income first, (2) providing equitable supports for three- and four-year olds who need additional support, and (3) providing the same LEA facility flexibilities to classrooms serving three-year olds that are currently allowed for four-year olds.

The bill will also strengthen system coherence by (4) ensuring programs have funding within their contract to address situations where children need multiple supports and (5) funding CSPP based on enrollment rather than attendance.

SUPPORT

Superintendent of Public Instruction – (Sponsor)

CONTACT

Matthew Godinez
Office of Assemblymember Juan Carrillo
Matthew.Godinez@asm.ca.gov
916-319-2039