



SB 443 (Rubio): Expanding Funding for Transitional Kindergarten

Bill Summary

SB 443 would provide state funding to public school districts for all students attending California's Transitional Kindergarten (TK) program, allowing schools to offer this valuable opportunity to all children who would benefit from it.

Existing Law

Currently, a California school district that chooses the option of opening its TK program to a four-year-old who turns five after December 2 does not receive any state funding until that child's fifth birthday.

For example, for a child born on March 15, the school district receives no funding for the first seven months of the school year. This is an enormous disincentive for any district that would otherwise want to offer an expanded TK program, as the district must provide the costly staffing and facilities to serve these students without receiving any state support for its efforts.

Background

TK was established in 2013 as a way to serve children who would otherwise have been left out of school when the entry-age for kindergarten eligibility was moved back from December 2 to September 2. Districts are now required to offer the TK program to children who turn 5 between September 2 and December 2. Schools have the option to offer TK to children who turn five after December 2, but they only receive funding after their fifth birthday. For that reason, many districts choose to offer TK to only those children they are required by law to serve. Other districts that expanded TK beyond the bare legal minimum at their own discretion are now considering rolling back the program in the face of tight budgets. This is a disservice to California's youngest public school students, as TK has proven to be remarkably successful. A three-year study by the American

Institutes for Research concluded "TK is effective for all groups of students who participated. It showed a particularly notable impact on language skills for English learners and mathematics skills for low-income students at kindergarten entry." In the West Covina School District, current kindergarten students who attended TK are in early literacy assessments 69% more likely to be on track than students of the same age who elected not to attend the program. At a time when our public school system is struggling to eliminate the achievement gap, we cannot afford to underutilize a program that has proven to be effective.

Details of the Bill

This bill would delete the current statute prohibiting districts from claiming state funding for the TK attendance of four-year-olds who turn five after December 2. In the absence of this existing statute, all Transitional Kindergartners will be treated equally for purposes of funding, and the structural disincentive against program expansion will be removed.

Support

West Covina Unified School District (Sponsor)

Opposition

None

For More Information

Nathaly Teran
Legislative Aide
Office of Senator Susan Rubio
State Capitol, Rm. 4052
(916)651-4022
Nathaly.teran@sen.ca.gov