



SB 614 (Rubio): Inclusive Early Childhood Education Grant

Bill Summary

SB 614 establishes the Inclusive Early Childhood Education Grant Program for the purpose of increasing access to early childhood education (ECE) programs. These grants will particularly focus on increasing access to inclusive ECE programs for children with exception needs up to five years of age, in low-income or high-needs communities.

Existing Law

All children with exceptional needs should have access to high-quality ECE programs where they can receive individualized and appropriate support while learning alongside children who do not have specialized needs. Federal law (Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) requires states to provide delayed or disabled children with high-quality learning opportunities. It mandates that children who receive special education services do so in the “least restrictive environment.” This ideally means spending as much time as possible with classmates who are not receiving special education.

Background

Well established research shows early childhood education programs can improve a child’s developmental progress and educational outcomes. Inclusive ECE programs are especially important for those with exception needs, as participation in intensive and timely services help these children achieve their brightest futures. Inclusive ECE programs also create a sense of belonging, promote positive social relationships and grow important skills in participating children.

In an effort to increase inclusive ECE access, California this year will disburse funds through a one-time grant program. Local education agencies (LEA) can use this money for infrastructure costs, including training, equipment and renovation of facilities.

Despite its investments in ECE, California still faces a severe shortage of state-subsidized child care. Recent

data shows that 1.2 million children are eligible for subsidized care but do not receive it due to the lack of access in the state (California Budget & Policy Center; 2016). The shortage is most acute for our youngest children, ages zero to three, with less than 14% of infants and toddlers who qualify for subsidized child care actually receiving services.

Details of the Bill

This bill would make the current grant program on-going, rather than a one-time effort. SB 614 will significantly bolster existing efforts to expand inclusive early learning opportunities, and thus improve the lives of California’s exceptional needs children. SB 614 will also provide LEAs with greater flexibility on how they can utilize and spend this grant funding.

More specifically, SB 614 will extend the Inclusive Early Childhood Education Grant Program and also lay-out criteria for awarding funds. Grant proposals must demonstrate how counties will increase access to subsidized inclusive ECE programs for children up to five years old, particularly those with exceptional needs in low-income or high-needs communities. Applicants who can highlight their ability to serve children with a broad range of developmental delays and disabilities will also be prioritized.

Support

Opposition

None

For More Information

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