



AB 2594 – Streamlining Quality Requirements for State Preschools

SUMMARY

AB 2594 grants the California Department of Education (CDE) the authority to waive Title 5 standards for state preschool programs that choose to meet stricter Head Start standards.

BACKGROUND

Head Start is a federal program that promotes school readiness of children under five from low-income families through education, health, social and other services. The standards for staffing ratios under Head Start are more specific than the Title 5 requirements.

For example, preschools that meet federal Head Start standards must establish a specific number of students per class for each age range (e.g. 15-17 children enrolled in a 3 year-old class). Head Start programs also require that two paid staff persons are present in each center-based classroom, and recommend an additional volunteer be present.

The state's Title 5 standards, on the other hand, have a broader definition of staffing ratios. Title 5 standards apply to three general age groups— infant, toddler, and preschool classrooms. They do not specify the number of students needed in each classroom, but rather give more general teacher-child ratios for each age group. For this reason, by nature of meeting the stricter Head Start requirements, a facility also meets the Title 5 requirements.

PROBLEM

Under current law, California preschool programs that qualify for the federal Head Start program must also separately qualify for the state's Title 5 subsidized childcare program. This means twice the amount of administrative work for preschool operators, who must fill out duplicative paperwork and undergo two separate review processes for approval by both federal and state educational program requirements.

THIS BILL

AB 2594 is a streamlining bill that grants CDE the authority to waive Title 5 standards for state preschool programs that have already prove to meet the stricter Head Start standards.

There is no reason why school administrators should spend time separately providing qualifying information to the state when they could be focusing on students. If a program meets the Head Start standards, then it also meets the Title 5 standards.

Making this change would also reduce costs to the state, because department staff would no longer need to use resources reviewing duplicative applications for approvals. This means that CDE staff could expend their resources focusing on other important educational issues.

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