



Senator Susan Rubio

REPRESENTING SENATE DISTRICT 22



SB 70 (Rubio): Mandatory Kindergarten

Bill Summary

SB 70 will ensure that children receive critical instruction in their earliest years of learning by requiring students in the state to attend kindergarten.

Current Law

Existing California law does not mandate children to attend kindergarten. Compulsory education law (*Education Code [EC] Section 48200*) requires everyone between six and eighteen years of age to attend school. Since school is mandatory for six-year-old students, parents and guardians must enroll their children in school once they reach the age of six (*EC Section 48200*). It is a local decision, with parental input, whether the six-year-old student will be enrolled in kindergarten or first grade. For first grade enrollment, California law requires a child to be six years old on or before September 1 for the 2014-15 school year and each school year thereafter to be legally eligible for first grade (*EC Section 48010*).

Background

The first five years of age are pivotal for children and their physical, intellectual, and socio-emotional development. Kindergarten helps build the educational foundation for future learning and success. However, since kindergarten is not mandatory, students that do not attend, miss fundamental instruction putting them at a disadvantage in a classroom setting as they enter first grade.

Currently, 39 states including California, plus the District of Columbia, require districts to offer kindergarten (either full day or half day instruction); yet, only 19 states and the District of Columbia actually require children to attend kindergarten¹. In California, the current voluntary participation of kindergarten allows parents to delay their child's entrance into school until the first grade, which leaves students unprepared for the educational environment they will encounter in elementary school.

According to the National Education Association, research has shown that kindergartners who miss 10% or more school days have lower academic performance when they reach the first grade². The impact is even greater and more detrimental for students who do not attend kindergarten at all and miss a whole academic school year.

In addition, concerns are rising about the opportunity gap being heightened by school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic. Experts predict that low-income, K-12 Latino students will fall as much as nine months— a full academic year— behind non-Hispanic White and higher-income students from classes missed in spring 2020 alone³. The statistics show that now more than ever, kindergarten attendance is necessary to ensure all students receive critical early instruction to help avoid falling behind.

School districts across the state are also experiencing drops in student enrollment. At the Los Angeles Unified School District, kindergarten enrollment for the 2020-21 academic year has dropped by 14 percent⁴. This decline is even more prevalent at the kindergarten level, especially in the school system's lowest-income neighborhoods, and is about three times as large as in recent years⁵.

Details of the Bill

SB 70 amends the Education Code Section 48010 by requiring students to complete one year of kindergarten prior to entering the first grade.

Support

Los Angeles Unified School District (*Sponsor*)
Alhambra Unified School District
American Association of University Women California
Azusa Unified School District
Baldwin Park Unified School District
California Association of Bilingual Education
California Charter Schools Association
California Kindergarten Association

¹ <https://www.ecs.org/kindergarten-policies/>

² <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED595241.pdf>

³ <https://www.latinas.org/eslr2020>

⁴ <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-09-01/lausd-kindergarten-enrollment-drop-online-learning>

⁵ <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-08-31/lausd-kindergarten-enrollment-drop>



California Latino School Boards Association
California School Employees Association
California State PTA
California Teachers Association
Californians Together
Central City Association of Los Angeles
Charter Oak Unified School District
Child360
Covina-Valley Unified School District
Early Edge California
El Monte City School District
Families in Schools
First 5 California
Fresno Unified School District
Garvey School District
Hacienda La Puente Unified School District
Montebello Unified School District
Mountain View School District
Parent Engagement Academy
Rosemead School District
San Diego Unified School District
Temple City Unified School District
UNITE-LA
West Covina Unified School District

For More Information

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