

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS**

Bill Number: SB 636

52nd Legislature, 1st Session, 2015

Tracking Number: .200453.1

Short Title: Early Childhood Programs

Sponsor(s): Senator Pete Campos

Analyst: James Ball

Date: March 17, 2015

Bill Summary:

SB 636 makes an appropriation for early childhood programs.

Fiscal Impact:

\$10.0 million is appropriated from the General Fund to the Public Education Department (PED) for expenditure in FY 16. Unexpended or unencumbered funds revert to the General Fund.

Fiscal Issues:

According to PED, the Governor's budget recommendation for FY 16 contains almost \$58 million in funding for early childhood programs. SB 636 appears to contain a nonrecurring appropriation to be used for recurring purposes. Programs funded to serve additional children could not continue beyond FY 16 without subsequent appropriations.

Technical Issues:

PED expresses a concern that SB 636 does not clearly define "early childhood programs." Are the early childhood programs for children who are in preschool or for those who are in preschool through third grade, or would this be left to PED discretion?

Substantive Issues:

During the past interim the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) heard testimony from the New Mexico Early Childcare and Early Education Task Force, which made the following recommendations for future development of early childhood programs:

- support for early education and care professionals;
- workforce development;
- reduction of administrative burdens;
- enhancement of higher education; and
- stability with regard to the eligibility of children and families for services.

This testimony concluded with some specific recommendations of the task force, including:

- identifying and pursuing incentive options that would encourage child-care subsidy families to select high-quality, evidence-based child-care;
- setting an attainable goal for the percentage of subsidized children who attend high-quality programs within the next five years; and
- providing support to enable registered home-based providers to become licensed.

Background:

During the 2014 interim the LESC also heard testimony specifically on the early childhood programs at PED. Enacted in 2007, the K-3 Plus program began as a six-year pilot program that extended the school year in kindergarten through grade 3 by at least 25 instructional days. The program is intended to demonstrate the academic and social benefits of increased classroom time in kindergarten and the early grades. In 2012, the K-3 Plus provisions in the *Public School Code* were amended to convert the program from a pilot project to an established PED program. Since 2011, the program has been evaluated by the Start Smart K-3 Plus Project at Utah State University (USU).

The evaluator testified that the emerging picture is one of evidence that K-3 Plus boosts student achievement in a variety of areas in kindergarten and grade 1 at the beginning of the school year.

The LESC also heard testimony on national trends in early literacy interventions by a professor of education in the Harvard Graduate School of Education and by a policy analyst with the Education Commission of the States (ECS).

Describing her focus on children from minority, multi-lingual, and socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, the professor compared New Mexico's demographics with those of the rest of the country:

- 33 percent of children ages birth through five in New Mexico live in poverty, compared to 26 percent of US children among the same age group; and
- 22 percent of children and youth in New Mexico are children of immigrants, compared to 24 percent in the United States.

A majority of these children, this testimony emphasized, are generally not fluent in English, creating an obstacle to their proficiency in literacy.

Committee Referrals:

SEC/SFC

Related Bills:

CS/HB 2 & 4a *General Appropriation Act of 2015*
HB 5 *General Appropriation Act of 2015*
HB 451 *Increase Number & Quality of Pre-K Programs*
*HB 541 *Early Childhood Provider Benefit Incentives*
HB 547 *Create Early Learning Dept.*
HB 555 *Early Childhood Educator Scholarship Fund*

SB 210 *General Appropriation Act of 2015*
CS/SB 301a *Create Early Childhood Funds*
SB 304aa *Early Childhood Books and Toys*
SB 343 *Guadalupe County Early Childhood Programs*
SB 344 *Northeastern NM Early Childhood Programs*
*SB 559 *Early Childhood Provider Benefit Incentives*
SJR 5a *School Fund for Early Childhood, CA*