



Senate

General Assembly

File No. 391

February Session, 2014

Senate Bill No. 424

Senate, April 7, 2014

The Committee on Education reported through SEN. STILLMAN of the 20th Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the Senate, that the bill ought to pass.

AN ACT CONCERNING ACCESS TO PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN IN THE CARE AND CUSTODY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2014*) (a) For purposes of this
2 section:

3 (1) "Preschool-aged child" means any child age three to five,
4 inclusive; and

5 (2) "Eligible preschool program" means (A) a school readiness
6 program, as defined in section 10-16p of the general statutes, (B) a
7 preschool program administered by a local or regional board of
8 education, (C) a preschool program accredited by the National
9 Association for the Education of Young Children, or (D) a school
10 readiness program that is part of a Head Start program.

11 (b) The Department of Children and Families shall enroll in an
12 eligible preschool program each preschool-aged child who is (1) placed

13 in out-of-home care by the Commissioner of Children and Families
14 pursuant to an order of commitment under section 46b-129 of the
15 general statutes, and (2) not enrolled in an eligible preschool program
16 or kindergarten at the time of such placement, unless such enrollment
17 is determined by the department to not be in the child's best interest.
18 The department shall document such enrollment or the reasons why
19 such enrollment was determined not to be in the child's best interest in
20 the child's written plan for care, treatment and permanent placement,
21 as described in section 17a-15 of the general statutes.

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections: | | |
|---|--|--|

| | | |
|-----------|---------------------|-------------|
| Section 1 | <i>July 1, 2014</i> | New section |
|-----------|---------------------|-------------|

ED *Joint Favorable*

The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.

OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact:

| Agency Affected | Fund-Effect | FY 15 \$ | FY 16 \$ |
|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Children & Families, Dept. | GF - Cost | approx. 2.8 million | approx. 2.8 million |
| Department of Education | GF - Potential Cost | None | See Below |

Municipal Impact:

| Agency Affected | Fund-Effect | FY 15 \$ | FY 16 \$ |
|--|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Various Local and Regional School Districts. | STATE MANDATE - Cost | 2.3 million | 2.3 million |

Explanation

The bill results in a cost to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) of approximately \$2.8 million annually as it requires DCF to enroll all preschool-aged children placed in out-of-home care in an eligible preschool program. Depending on the type of placement the bill could also result in a cost to the local and regional school districts of \$2.3 million. Currently, DCF pays for preschool or daycare for 261 of the 485 preschool-aged children placed in out-of-home care. The cost to enroll an additional 224 children in preschool will vary dependent upon what type of placements can be obtained and the number of these children that will require transportation to and from preschool by a DCF vendor.

DCF Transportation Cost

The DCF vendor cost to transport a child to and from a school setting that is less than an hour away from a child's placement is \$150

roundtrip. The full year/full day school readiness program is 50 weeks a year. Using this number of weeks as a base, the vendor cost to DCF to transport a child to and from a preschool program is \$37,500 annually. Approximately 26% of the 261 children currently enrolled in preschool or daycare require transportation from a vendor. Applying this percentage to the expanded population of children, the cost to DCF under the bill for vendor transportation to and from preschool would be \$2,184,000 annually. The remaining 74% of the 261 children currently enrolled in preschool or daycare receive transportation from their foster parent(s). It is assumed that there would be no additional cost to DCF from foster parent transport of approximately 166 children as the DCF monthly subsidy to foster parents covers typical expenses such as child transportation.

Preschool Special Education

The cost to DCF for enrollment of 224 children in eligible preschool programs will vary dependent upon what program slots are available in locations near to where children are placed. It is anticipated that 41% of preschool children 3 to 5 years old in the child welfare system have developmental delays and are, therefore, eligible for preschool under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities with Education Act (IDEA).¹ Applying this percentage to the number of children to be enrolled, 92 children would be eligible for preschool in their school districts at no cost to DCF. For children with special needs placed in a public preschool setting, the cost to the local and regional school districts would vary depending on the actual needs of the child, the current classroom availability and the number of children placed. An annual cost for 92 children with special needs in a public preschool setting at an average cost of \$25,000 would be \$2.3 million.

School Readiness and Other Programs

It is assumed that 20% (45 children) are estimated to be placed in

¹National Survey for Child and Adolescent Well-Being, No. 8., *Need for Early Intervention Services Among Infants and Toddlers in Child Welfare*.

school readiness programs funded through the Office of Early Childhood. The cost to parents at the highest income levels for such a placement is \$4,950 annually. It is assumed that DCF will be charged this amount for 45 children, resulting in an annual cost of \$222,750 for these placements. An additional 20% (45 children) are anticipated to be placed in preschool, either private or public, that charge an estimated \$10,000 annually per child, resulting in a cost to DCF of \$450,000 annually for these placements.

The remaining children are assumed to be placed in a school readiness program that is a part of Head Start (18% or 40 children) and 1% or two children will win placements in magnet preschool lotteries, both at no cost to DCF. To the extent that a child is placed in a magnet school pre-k program, it is anticipated that the child placement was due to the lottery in the magnet school program and would be part of the planned magnet school State Department of Education grants. The actual cost would vary depending on the magnet school location. The magnet per pupil grants range from \$3,000 to \$13,054. Tuition costs to the LEA's may also be incurred.

It should be noted that pre-school children attending public schools are counted in the Education Equalization Grant formula (ECS grant). This may result in additional cost to the state and a corresponding revenue gain to the municipalities in FY 16.

The Out Years

The fiscal impact identified above would continue into the future subject to the number of preschool-aged children placed in out-of-home care by DCF, the type of eligible preschool program these children are enrolled into and associated transportation costs.

Sources: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/early_intervention_0.pdf
<http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/Readiness/sroverview.pdf>
U.S. General Services Administration: *Privately Owned Vehicle Mileage Reimbursement Rates*

OLR Bill Analysis**SB 424*****AN ACT CONCERNING ACCESS TO PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN IN THE CARE AND CUSTODY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.*****SUMMARY:**

This bill requires the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to enroll in preschool programs all children who are (1) placed in out-of-home care by DCF under a commitment order, (2) aged three to five years, and (3) not already enrolled in preschool or kindergarten at the time of placement. If DCF determines that preschool enrollment is not in the child's best interest, the enrollment requirement is waived. The bill does not specify whether DCF is responsible for preschool costs.

The bill allows DCF to enroll such children in any of the following preschool programs:

1. a school readiness program that receives State Department of Education (SDE) funding,
2. a school readiness program that is part of a Head Start program, or
3. a preschool program that is (a) administered by a local or regional board of education or (b) accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

The bill also requires DCF to document in the child's plan for care, treatment, and permanent placement (1) such preschool enrollments or (2) the reasons why enrollment is not in the child's best interest.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2014

BACKGROUND
Commitment Order

Upon finding that any child is uncared for, neglected, or abused, the Superior Court may commit the child to the DCF commissioner until it makes further orders. The court may revoke commitment or terminate parental rights at any time (CGS § 46b-129(j)(2)).

School Readiness Program

By law, a “school readiness program” is a nonreligious, SDE-funded education program that provides a developmentally appropriate learning experience of at least 450 hours and 180 days for children between ages three and five who are unable to enroll in kindergarten (CGS § 10-16p(a)(1)). SDE funds school readiness programs through priority school district grants and competitive grants (CGS § 10-16p(c)-(d)).

School readiness program providers eligible for SDE funding include local and regional boards of education, regional educational service centers (RESCs), family resource centers, child day care centers, Head Start programs, and other preschool programs that meet the education commissioner’s standards (CGS § 10-16p(b)(1)).

Care, Treatment, and Permanent Placement Plan

By law, the DCF commissioner must maintain a written plan for care, treatment, and permanent placement for each child under DCF supervision. The plan must include a diagnosis of each child’s problems, a proposed plan of treatment services and temporary placement, and a goal for permanent placement of the child (CGS § 17a-15).

COMMITTEE ACTION

Education Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 33 Nay 0 (03/21/2014)