

PRESCHOOL

LEGISLATOR NOTICE

The Legislative Services Division is required to offer a brief history on the subject matter of a bill draft request prior to drafting. (5-4-105, MCA; [Chapter 309, Laws of 2017](#)) The history must include related legislation introduced over the last five sessions and hyperlinks to the bill, hearing information, and fiscal notes. The legislation links below open to the page showing the status and history of bills introduced on this topic in the past. The bill text and any related fiscal notes can be accessed through the link at the top of that page.

Legislation can be complex and this history is not intended to be exhaustive. Please contact the drafter of the requested bill for more information.

Background Materials and Research

Topic Summary:

In recent years a number of states have increased their investment in early childhood education. The conversation in Montana was stimulated by Governor Bullock through his Early Edge proposal in 2015, which included a request in the 2017 Biennium Executive Budget for \$18.5 million/year in FY 2016 and FY 2017 “to provide early education for 4-year olds in Montana.”

The proposal also requested the following language to be included in HB 2: "Early Childhood Education may only be used by the office of public instruction to distribute block grants for voluntary, high-quality, pre-kindergarten for 4-year olds. School districts may partner with Head Start, local child care centers, family child care providers, or provide services within district facilities."

There was no proposed legislation outlining the program beyond the above language and the budget proposal was rejected by the 2015 Legislature.

In 2017, legislation creating a preschool grant program was proposed, but tabled in House Education. However, late in the session a new “hospital community benefit assessment” was created, temporarily raising \$3 million/year from assessments on 14 hospitals around the state. This \$3 million was then directed to DPHHS to “expand the [Stars to Quality] program and increase access to preschool for 4- and 5-year-old children.” Stars to Quality was an existing QRIS (Quality Rating and Improvement System) aimed at incentivizing quality improvements to early childhood centers and providers.

Legislative Services Division Materials:

[Montana Preschool Landscape 2017](#)

Other Materials:

[STARS Preschool update](#) (presented to Education Interim Committee, Jan 2018, by Siri Smillie, Education Policy Advisor to Governor Bullock)

[NCSL Early Learning webpage](#)

[A Fair Start: Ensuring All Students are Ready to Learn](#) (NCSL report)

[Preschool policy considerations](#) (NCSL slides)

[How States Fund Pre-K](#) (Education Commission of the States)

Introduced Legislation

*Chapter number assigned means bill was passed and approved.

2017

[HOUSE BILL NO. 563](#) - (H) Died in Standing Committee -- AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE MONTANA PRESCHOOL GRANT PROGRAM; PROVIDING DEFINITIONS AND ELIGIBILITY FOR THE PROGRAM; CREATING THE BRIGHT START FOR MONTANA KIDS BOARD TO ADMINISTER THE PROGRAM; PROVIDING REQUIREMENTS FOR GRANT ELIGIBILITY AND REPORTING; AMENDING THE DEFINITION OF "ELIGIBLE TRANSPORTEE" TO INCLUDE PRESCHOOL PUPILS; PROVIDING AN APPROPRIATION; AMENDING SECTION 20-10-101, MCA; AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE AND AN APPLICABILITY DATE.

[HOUSE BILL NO. 639](#) - Chapter Number Assigned -- AN ACT REVISING FUNDING FOR HEALTH CARE SERVICES; ADJUSTING THE CONVERSION FACTOR FOR PHYSICIAN SERVICES REIMBURSEMENT; IMPLEMENTING PROVISIONS OF THE GENERAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT; PROVIDING MEDICAID CASELOAD RESTRICTIONS; PROVIDING LIMITATIONS ON TRANSFERS OF FUNDING FOR THE MONTANA DEVELOPMENTAL CENTER; ESTABLISHING A TEMPORARY COMMUNITY BENEFIT ASSESSMENT FOR CERTAIN HOSPITALS; PROVIDING FOR A STATUTORY APPROPRIATION; AMENDING SECTIONS 17-7-502 AND 53-6-125, MCA; AND PROVIDING EFFECTIVE DATES AND A TERMINATION DATE.

2015 – No introduced legislation in 2015. See explanation of budget proposal above.

2013 – No introduced legislation in 2013.

2011

[SENATE BILL NO. 244](#) - (H) Died in Standing Committee -- AN ACT ALLOWING THE TRUSTEES OF AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT TO CHARGE A FEE TO A CHILD WITHOUT A DISABILITY TO ENTER A PRESCHOOL PROGRAM; AMENDING SECTION 20-7-117, MCA; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

2009 – No introduced legislation in 2009.

Prepared By:

Pad McCracken, Research Analyst
Office of Research and Policy Analysis
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