

**Study on Requiring Local School  
Boards to Provide Early Childhood  
Education in Virginia's Public Schools**

**REPORT TO THE CHAIR OF THE SENATE  
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND HEALTH  
AND THE PATRON OF SB 372 IN RESPONSE TO A  
LETTER FROM THE CLERK OF THE SENATE**

**NOVEMBER 1, 2014**

**LEGISLATION**

At the 2014 General Assembly Session, Senate Bill 372 (SB 372) was introduced which mandated, by fiscal year 2020, that local school boards provide early childhood education programs for Virginia children meeting the following criteria:

- are age four or five;
- are not eligible to attend at-risk early childhood education programs or kindergarten; and,
- whose parents wish to enroll them in such programs.

The bill was passed by indefinitely in the Senate Committee on Education and Health. The Clerk of the Senate, in a letter to the Secretary of Education, referred the subject matter contained in SB 372 to the Secretary for study and requested that the chair of the Senate Committee on Education and Health and the bill patron receive a written report, with a copy provided to the Clerk of the Senate, by November 1, 2014.

**BACKGROUND**

SB 372 would have amended Section 22.1-199.1 and Section 22.1-253.13:1 of the *Code of Virginia* by adding the following language to these two sections:

SB 372 would have added the following new language to Section 22.1-199.1 C.:

*On and after July 1, 2019, school boards shall be required to provide early childhood education programs for four-year-olds and five-year-olds who are not eligible to attend kindergarten or at-risk early childhood education programs and whose parents voluntarily wish to enroll them in such programs. These mandated early childhood education programs shall be coordinated with the at-risk early childhood programs established herein, consistent with the Department's guidelines for early childhood education, and meet the standards established by the Board of Education. The Board of Education shall develop regulations to implement the orderly phase-in of these required programs with the existing programs for at-risk four-year-olds and at-risk five-year-olds who are not eligible to attend kindergarten.*

SB 372 would have added the following new language to Section 22.1-253.13:1 D.18.:

*On and after July 1, 2019, early childhood education programs for four-year-olds and five-year-olds who are not eligible to attend kindergarten and whose parents voluntarily wish to enroll them in such programs. These mandated early childhood education programs shall be coordinated with the current at-risk early childhood programs established pursuant to § 22.1-199.1, consistent with the Department's guidelines for early childhood education, and meet the standards established by the Board of Education. The Board of Education shall develop regulations to implement the orderly phase-in of these required programs with the existing programs for at-risk four-year-olds and at-risk five-year-olds who are not eligible to attend kindergarten.*

These amendments would have required, by fiscal year 2020, local school boards to provide early childhood education programs equivalent to universal preschool programs for all four- and five-year-old children meeting the criteria above, and the Board of Education to create regulations to help phase in such programs.

**ESTIMATED FISCAL IMPACT OF SB 372**

Estimating the fiscal impact of mandating local school boards to provide early childhood education programs under SB 372 is based on the following assumptions and methodology:

1. while the mandate to provide early childhood education programs is effective in fiscal year 2020, the data used to calculate the estimated fiscal impact is the most currently available.
2. the starting base of children is a 2013 U.S. Census estimate of four-year-olds by Virginia school division and an estimate of five-year-olds not eligible for kindergarten (i.e., not five years-old by September 30<sup>th</sup>). This is a total of 128,047 children statewide.
3. identifying by school division the number of children served by Head Start, Title I preschool, and the Virginia Preschool Initiative. This is a total of 30,267 children statewide.
4. by school division, the total in step 3 is subtracted from the total in step 2 for an estimate of four- and five-year-olds not served by an existing preschool program for at-risk children. This is a total of 97,780 children statewide.
5. by school division, the total cost to serve the estimated number of unserved children from step 4 is calculated based on two per pupil cost scenarios (see summary table below):
  - a per pupil cost of \$6,000 (amount used in Virginia Preschool Initiative formula)
  - a per pupil cost of \$10,000 (estimate of what divisions may spend per pupil for preschool)
 (Note: a 100 percent participation rate of unserved children is assumed in this calculation).
6. SB 372 does not specify if the cost of the early childhood education programs school divisions would be mandated to provide would be locally funded or the cost shared between the state and localities. If the cost would be shared, the state and local shares of cost are calculated based on the Composite Index for each school division (see summary table below).

<b>SB 372 Estimated Fiscal Impact Summary</b>					
<b>Total, State, &amp; Local Cost @ <u>\$6,000</u> per Child</b>			<b>Total, State, &amp; Local Cost @ <u>\$10,000</u> per Child</b>		
<b><u>Estimated Total Cost at \$6,000 Per Child</u></b>	<b><u>Estimated State Share at \$6,000 Per Child</u></b>	<b><u>Estimated Local Share at \$6,000 Per Child</u></b>	<b><u>Estimated Total Cost at \$10,000 Per Child</u></b>	<b><u>Estimated State Share at \$10,000 Per Child</u></b>	<b><u>Estimated Local Share at \$10,000 Per Child</u></b>
<b>\$586,680,000</b>	<b>\$311,449,962</b>	<b>\$275,230,038</b>	<b>\$977,800,000</b>	<b>\$519,083,270</b>	<b>\$458,716,730</b>

**OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

The fiscal impact of SB372 may be mitigated somewhat if the actual participation rate as a voluntary program is below 100 percent, which would be likely. Additionally, other factors may contribute to the fiscal impact and the ease of implementation of this legislation. Some local school divisions would face significant capital costs for the school facilities and classroom capacity necessary to accommodate the expansion in preschool enrollment. Also, sufficient availability of high quality preschool teachers needed for the increased preschool enrollment would need to be addressed.