

1 Introduced by Committee on Education

2 Date:

3 Subject: Education; prekindergarten education

4 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to (i) eliminate
5 joint administration by the Agency of Education and the Agency of Human
6 Services of prekindergarten programs and designate the Agency of Education
7 as the lead regulator; (ii) centralize the prekindergarten accounting and
8 contracting functions by moving these functions from school districts to the
9 Agency of Education; and (iii) simplify and clarify the quality criteria for
10 prekindergarten providers.

11 An act relating to prekindergarten education

12 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

13 Sec. 1. 16 V.S.A. § 829 is amended to read:

14 § 829. PREKINDERGARTEN EDUCATION

15 (a) Definitions. As used in this section:

16 (1) “Prekindergarten child” means a child who, as of the date
17 established by the district of residence for kindergarten eligibility, is three or
18 four years of age or is five years of age but is not yet eligible to be enrolled in
19 kindergarten.

1 (2) “Prekindergarten education” means services designed to provide to
2 prekindergarten children developmentally appropriate early development and
3 learning experiences based on Vermont’s early learning standards.

4 (3) “~~Prequalified private~~ Private provider” means a private provider of
5 prekindergarten education that is ~~qualified pursuant to subsection (c) of this~~
6 ~~section~~ licensed as a center-based child care program or family child care
7 home to provide child care by the Child Development Division of the Agency
8 of Human Services.

9 (4) “Public provider” means a provider of kindergarten education that is
10 located on public school property and is subject to the jurisdiction of a local
11 public school board.

12 (b) Access to publicly funded prekindergarten education.

13 (1) ~~No~~ Not fewer than ten hours per week of publicly funded
14 prekindergarten education shall be available for 35 weeks annually to each
15 prekindergarten child whom a parent or guardian wishes to enroll in an
16 available, ~~prequalified~~ prekindergarten education program ~~operated by a public~~
17 ~~school or a private provider.~~

18 (2) If a parent or guardian chooses to enroll a prekindergarten child in
19 an available, ~~prequalified~~ prekindergarten education program, then, pursuant to
20 the parent or guardian’s choice, the ~~school district of residence~~ Secretary shall:

1 (A) pay tuition pursuant to ~~subsections (d) and (h)~~ subsection (d) of
2 this section upon the request of the parent or guardian to:

3 (i)(A) a ~~prequalified~~ private provider located in Vermont; or

4 (ii)(B) a Vermont public school that operates a prekindergarten
5 education program whether located inside or outside the district ~~that operates a~~
6 ~~prekindergarten program that has been prequalified pursuant to subsection (c)~~
7 ~~of this section; or~~

8 (B) ~~enroll the child in the prekindergarten education program that it~~
9 ~~operates in which the child resides.~~

10 (3) ~~If requested by the parent or guardian of a prekindergarten child, the~~
11 ~~school district of residence shall pay tuition to a prequalified program operated~~
12 ~~by a private provider or a public school in another district even if the district of~~
13 ~~residence operates a prekindergarten education program.~~

14 (4) ~~If the supply of prequalified private and public providers is~~
15 ~~insufficient to meet the demand for publicly funded prekindergarten education~~
16 ~~in any region of the State, nothing~~ Nothing in this section shall be construed to
17 require the State or a district to begin or expand a prekindergarten education
18 program to satisfy that demand; but rather, in collaboration with the Agencies
19 of Education and of Human Services, the local Building Bright Futures
20 Council shall meet with school districts and private providers in the region to
21 develop a regional plan to expand capacity for prekindergarten education.

1 (c) ~~Prequalification. Pursuant to rules jointly developed and overseen by~~
2 ~~the Secretaries of Education and of Human Services and adopted by the State~~
3 ~~Board pursuant to 3 V.S.A. chapter 25, the Agencies jointly may determine~~
4 ~~that a private or public provider of prekindergarten education is qualified for~~
5 ~~purposes of this section and include the provider in a publicly accessible~~
6 ~~database of prequalified providers. At a minimum, the rules shall define the~~
7 ~~process by which a provider applies for and maintains prequalification status,~~
8 ~~shall identify the minimum quality standards for prequalification, and shall~~
9 ~~include the following requirements~~ Provider qualification. In order to be
10 eligible for tuition payments for a publicly funded prekindergarten education
11 program:

12 (1) ~~A program of prekindergarten education, whether provided by a~~
13 ~~school district or a private provider, shall have received~~ private provider shall
14 meet minimum program quality by:

15 (A) having National Association for the Education of Young
16 Children (NAEYC) accreditation; or

17 (B) at least four stars in the Department for Children and Families'
18 STARS system ~~with a plan to get to at least two points in each of the five~~
19 ~~arenas; or~~ and

20 (C) ~~three stars in the STARS system if the provider has developed a~~
21 ~~plan, approved by the Commissioner for Children and Families and the~~

1 ~~Secretary of Education, to achieve four or more stars with at least two points in~~
2 ~~each of the five arenas in no more than three years, and the provider has met~~
3 ~~intermediate milestones~~

4 (B) employing or contracting for the services of at least one teacher
5 who is licensed and endorsed in early childhood education or in early
6 childhood special education under chapter 51 of this title who is present at the
7 program site during the hours that are publicly funded.

8 (2) A ~~licensed public provider shall employ or contract~~ meet minimum
9 program quality by:

10 (A) employing or contracting for the services of at least one teacher
11 who is licensed and endorsed in early childhood education or in early
12 childhood special education under chapter 51 of this title to provide direct
13 instruction during the hours that are publicly funded;

14 (B) meeting safety and quality rules adopted by the State Board of
15 Education; and

16 (C) being under the supervision of a school district.

17 ~~(3) A registered home provider that is not licensed and endorsed in early~~
18 ~~childhood education or early childhood special education shall receive regular,~~
19 ~~active supervision and training from a teacher who is licensed and endorsed in~~
20 ~~early childhood education or in early childhood special education under~~
21 ~~chapter 51 of this title.~~

1 (d) Tuition, ~~budgets~~ payments, and average daily membership.

2 (1) On behalf of a resident prekindergarten child, ~~a district~~ the Secretary
3 shall pay tuition for prekindergarten education for ten hours per week for
4 35 weeks annually to a ~~prequalified~~ private provider or to a public school
5 ~~outside the district that is prequalified pursuant to subsection (c) of this~~
6 ~~section; provided, however, that the district shall pay tuition for weeks that are~~
7 ~~within the district's academic year~~ provider. ~~Tuition~~ Notwithstanding
8 subsection 4025(d) of this title, tuition paid under this section shall be paid
9 from the Education Fund at a statewide rate, which may be adjusted regionally,
10 that is established annually through a process ~~jointly~~ developed and
11 implemented by the ~~Agencies~~ Agency of Education ~~and of Human Services~~. ~~A~~
12 ~~district shall pay tuition upon~~ The Secretary shall establish procedures for
13 payment of tuition to public and private providers that require at a minimum
14 receiving:

15 (A) ~~receiving~~ annual notice from the child's parent or guardian that
16 the child is ~~or will be admitted to the~~ chooses to participate in a publicly
17 funded prekindergarten education program operated by the ~~prequalified~~ public
18 or private provider ~~or the other district; and~~

19 (B) concurrent ~~enrollment of the prekindergarten child in the district~~
20 ~~of residence for purposes of budgeting and determining average daily~~

1 membership notice from the public or private provider that the child is enrolled
2 in its program; and

3 (C) a request for reimbursement from the public or private provider
4 that reports enrollment for the period covered by the request and certifies that
5 the provider is eligible for public funding under subsection (c) of this section
6 for the period covered by the request.

7 ~~(2) In addition to any direct costs of operating a prekindergarten~~
8 ~~education program, a district of residence shall include anticipated tuition~~
9 ~~payments and any administrative, quality assurance, quality improvement,~~
10 ~~transition planning, or other prekindergarten-related costs in its annual budget~~
11 ~~presented to the voters.~~

12 ~~(3)~~ Pursuant to subdivision 4001(1)(C) of this title, ~~the district of~~
13 ~~residence~~ a district in which the child resides may include within its average
14 daily membership any prekindergarten child for whom it has provided
15 prekindergarten education ~~or on whose behalf it has paid tuition pursuant to~~
16 ~~this section~~ in excess of ten hours per week for 35 weeks annually and the
17 district shall not charge tuition for these educational services.

18 ~~(4)(3)~~ A prequalified private provider, or a public provider that is not the
19 child's district of residence, may receive additional payment directly from the
20 parent or guardian only for prekindergarten education in excess of the publicly
21 funded hours paid for ~~by the district~~ pursuant to this section subsection (d) or

1 for child care services, or both. The provider is not bound by the statewide rate
2 established in this subsection when determining the rates it will charge the
3 parent or guardian for these excess hours. A provider shall not impose
4 additional fees for the publicly funded hours.

5 (e) Rules. ~~The Secretary of Education and the Commissioner for Children~~
6 ~~and Families shall jointly develop and agree to rules and present them~~ shall
7 propose rules to the State Board for adoption under 3 V.S.A. chapter 25 as
8 follows:

9 ~~(1) To permit private providers that are not prequalified pursuant to~~
10 ~~subsection (e) of this section to create new or continue existing partnerships~~
11 ~~with school districts through which the school district provides supports that~~
12 ~~enable the provider to fulfill the requirements of subdivision (e)(2) or (3), and~~
13 ~~through which the district may or may not make in-kind payments as a~~
14 ~~component of the statewide tuition established under this section.~~

15 ~~(2) To authorize a district to begin or expand a school-based~~
16 ~~prekindergarten education program only upon prior approval obtained through~~
17 ~~a process jointly overseen by the Secretaries of Education and of Human~~
18 ~~Services, which shall be based upon analysis of the number of prekindergarten~~
19 ~~children residing in the district and the availability of enrollment opportunities~~
20 ~~with prequalified private providers in the region. Where the data are not clear~~

1 ~~or there are other complex considerations, the Secretaries may choose to~~
2 ~~conduct a community needs assessment.~~

3 ~~(3) To require that the school district provides opportunities for effective~~
4 ~~parental participation in the prekindergarten education program.~~

5 ~~(4) To establish a process by which:~~

6 ~~(A) a parent or guardian notifies the district that the prekindergarten~~
7 ~~child is or will be admitted to a prekindergarten education program not~~
8 ~~operated by the district and concurrently enrolls the child in the district~~
9 ~~pursuant to subdivision (d)(1) of this section;~~

10 ~~(B) a district:~~

11 ~~(i) pays tuition pursuant to a schedule that does not inhibit the~~
12 ~~ability of a parent or guardian to enroll a prekindergarten child in a~~
13 ~~prekindergarten education program or the ability of a prequalified private~~
14 ~~provider to maintain financial stability; and~~

15 ~~(ii) enters into an agreement with any provider to which it will pay~~
16 ~~tuition regarding quality assurance, transition, and any other matters; and~~

17 ~~(C) a provider that has received tuition payments under this section~~
18 ~~on behalf of a prekindergarten child notifies a district that the child is no longer~~
19 ~~enrolled.~~

20 ~~(5) To establish a process to calculate an annual statewide tuition rate~~
21 ~~that is based upon the actual cost of delivering ten hours per week of~~

1 ~~prekindergarten education that meets all established quality standards and to~~
2 ~~allow for regional adjustments to the rate.~~

3 ~~(6) [Repealed.]~~

4 ~~(7) To require a district to include identifiable costs for prekindergarten~~
5 ~~programs and essential early education services in its annual budgets and~~
6 ~~reports to the community.~~

7 ~~(8) To require a district to report to the Agency of Education annual~~
8 ~~expenditures made in support of prekindergarten education, with distinct~~
9 ~~figures provided for expenditures made from the General Fund, from the~~
10 ~~Education Fund, and from all other sources, which shall be specified.~~

11 ~~(9) To provide an administrative process for:~~

12 ~~(A) a parent, guardian, or provider to challenge an action of a school~~
13 ~~district or the State when the complainant believes that the district or State is in~~
14 ~~violation of State statute or rules regarding prekindergarten education; and~~

15 ~~(B) a school district to challenge an action of a provider or the State~~
16 ~~when the district believes that the provider or the State is in violation of State~~
17 ~~statute or rules regarding prekindergarten education.~~

18 ~~(10) To establish a system by which the Agency of Education and~~
19 ~~Department for Children and Families shall jointly monitor and evaluate~~
20 ~~prekindergarten education programs to promote optimal results for children~~
21 ~~that support the relevant population level outcomes set forth in 3 V.S.A.~~

1 ~~§ 2311 and to collect data that will inform future decisions. The Agency and~~
2 ~~Department shall be required to report annually to the General Assembly in~~
3 ~~January. At a minimum, the system shall monitor and evaluate:~~

4 ~~(A) programmatic details, including the number of children served,~~
5 ~~the number of private and public programs operated, and the public financial~~
6 ~~investment made to ensure access to quality prekindergarten education;~~

7 ~~(B) the quality of public and private prekindergarten education~~
8 ~~programs and efforts to ensure continuous quality improvements through~~
9 ~~mentoring, training, technical assistance, and otherwise; and~~

10 ~~(C) the results for children, including school readiness and~~
11 ~~proficiency in numeracy and literacy.~~

12 ~~(11) To establish a process for documenting the progress of children~~
13 ~~enrolled in prekindergarten education programs and to require public and~~
14 ~~private providers to use the process to:~~

15 ~~(A) help individualize instruction and improve program practice; and~~

16 ~~(B) collect and report child progress data to the Secretary of~~
17 ~~Education on an annual basis.~~

18 (1) To require that the Secretary provide opportunities for effective
19 parental participation in the prekindergarten education program.

20 (2) To establish a process by which tuition payments are requested and
21 made that includes the conditions in subdivisions (d)(1)(A)–(C) of this section.

1 (3) To establish a process to calculate an annual statewide tuition rate
2 that is based upon the actual cost of delivering ten hours per week of
3 prekindergarten education that meets all established quality standards and to
4 allow for regional adjustments to the rate.

5 (4) To provide an administrative process for:

6 (A) a parent or guardian to challenge a provider’s action or inaction
7 with respect to enrollment or billing; and

8 (B) a provider to challenge a decision of the Secretary not to pay a
9 request for reimbursement.

10 (5) To establish a system by which the Secretary shall monitor and
11 evaluate implementation of publicly funded prekindergarten education
12 programs to promote optimal results for children that support the relevant
13 population-level outcomes set forth in 3 V.S.A. § 2311 and collect data that
14 will inform future decisions. The Secretary shall report annually to the
15 General Assembly in January on the prior year. At a minimum, the system
16 shall monitor and evaluate:

17 (A) programmatic details, including the number of children enrolled,
18 the number of private and public programs operated, and the public financial
19 investment made to ensure access to quality prekindergarten education;

20 (B) the quality criteria of public and private kindergarten education
21 programs, training, and technical assistance; and

1 (C) the results for children, including school readiness and
2 proficiency in numeracy and literacy and social and emotional development.

3 (6) To establish a process for documenting the progress of children
4 enrolled in publicly funded prekindergarten education programs and to require
5 public and private providers to use the process to:

6 (A) help individualize instruction and improve program practice; and

7 (B) collect and report child progress data as required by the Secretary
8 on an annual basis.

9 (7) To establish safety and quality requirements for public providers.

10 ~~(f) Other provisions of law. Section 836 of this title shall not apply to this~~
11 ~~section.~~

12 ~~(g) Limitations. Nothing in this section shall be construed to permit or~~
13 ~~require payment of public funds to a private provider of prekindergarten~~
14 ~~education in violation of Chapter I, Article 3 of the Vermont Constitution or in~~
15 ~~violation of the Establishment Clause of the U.S. Constitution.~~

16 ~~(h) Geographic limitations.~~

17 ~~(1) Notwithstanding the requirement that a district pay tuition to any~~
18 ~~prequalified public or private provider in the State, a school board may choose~~
19 ~~to limit the geographic boundaries within which the district shall pay tuition by~~
20 ~~paying tuition solely to those prequalified providers in which parents and~~
21 ~~guardians choose to enroll resident prekindergarten children that are located~~

1 ~~within the district’s “prekindergarten region” as determined in subdivision (2)~~
2 ~~of this subsection.~~

3 ~~(2) For purposes of this subsection, upon application from the school~~
4 ~~board, a district’s prekindergarten region shall be determined jointly by the~~
5 ~~Agencies of Education and of Human Services in consultation with the school~~
6 ~~board, private providers of prekindergarten education, parents and guardians of~~
7 ~~prekindergarten children, and other interested parties pursuant to a process~~
8 ~~adopted by rule under subsection (e) of this section. A prekindergarten region:~~

9 ~~(A) shall not be smaller than the geographic boundaries of the school~~
10 ~~district;~~

11 ~~(B) shall be based in part upon the estimated number of~~
12 ~~prekindergarten children residing in the district and in surrounding districts, the~~
13 ~~availability of prequalified private and public providers of prekindergarten~~
14 ~~education, commuting patterns, and other region-specific criteria; and~~

15 ~~(C) shall be designed to support existing partnerships between the~~
16 ~~school district and private providers of prekindergarten education.~~

17 ~~(3) If a school board chooses to pay tuition to providers solely within its~~
18 ~~prekindergarten region, and if a resident prekindergarten child is unable to~~
19 ~~access publicly funded prekindergarten education within that region, then the~~
20 ~~child’s parent or guardian may request and in its discretion the district may pay~~

1 ~~tuition at the statewide rate for a prekindergarten education program operated~~
2 ~~by a prequalified provider located outside the prekindergarten region.~~

3 ~~(4) Except for the narrow exception permitting a school board to limit~~
4 ~~geographic boundaries under subdivision (1) of this subsection, all other~~
5 ~~provisions of this section and related rules shall continue to apply.~~

6 Sec. 2. 16 V.S.A. § 4001 is amended to read:

7 § 4001. DEFINITIONS

8 As used in this chapter:

9 (1) “Average daily membership” of a school district, or if needed in
10 order to calculate the appropriate homestead tax rate, of the municipality as
11 defined in 32 V.S.A. § 5401(9), in any year means:

12 * * *

13 (C) ~~The full-time equivalent enrollment for each prekindergarten~~
14 ~~child as follows: If a child is enrolled in 10 or more hours of prekindergarten~~
15 ~~education per week or receives 10 or more hours of essential early education~~
16 ~~services per week, the child shall be counted as one full time equivalent pupil.~~
17 ~~If a child is enrolled in six or more but fewer than 10 hours of prekindergarten~~
18 ~~education per week or if a child receives fewer than 10 hours of essential early~~
19 ~~education services per week, the child shall be counted as a percentage of one~~
20 ~~full-time equivalent pupil, calculated as one multiplied by the number of hours~~
21 ~~per week divided by ten. A child enrolled in prekindergarten education for~~

1 ~~fewer than six hours per week shall not be included in the district's average~~
2 ~~daily membership~~ enrolled in excess of ten hours in a public school in the
3 district in which the child resides prorated to reflect the hours of education
4 provided by the school in excess of ten hours. There is no limit on the total
5 number of children who may be enrolled in prekindergarten education or who
6 receive essential early education services.

7 * * *

8 Sec. 3. 33 V.S.A. § 3502 is amended to read:

9 § 3502. CHILD CARE FACILITIES; SCHOOL AGE CARE IN PUBLIC
10 SCHOOLS; 21ST CENTURY FUND

11 (a) Unless exempted under subsection (b) of this section, a person shall not
12 operate a child care facility without a license, or operate a family child care
13 home without registration from the Department.

14 (b) The following persons are exempted from the provisions of subsection
15 (a) of this section:

16 * * *

17 (5) an after-school program that serves students in one or more grades
18 from kindergarten through secondary school, that receives funding through the
19 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, and that is overseen by
20 the Agency of Education, unless the after-school program asks to participate in
21 the child care subsidy program; and

