HOUSE FILE 2621
BY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

(SUCCESSOR TO HF 2460)
(SUCCESSOR TO HF 2048)

A BILL FOR

1 An Act relating to the statewide preschool program by modifying
2 provisions relating to eligibility, funding, and compulsory
3 attendance and including applicability provisions.
4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF IOWA:
Section 1. Section 135.173A, subsection 4, paragraph p, Code 2020, is amended to read as follows:

p. One person who is part of a local program implementing the statewide preschool program for four-year-old young children under chapter 256C.

Sec. 2. Section 135.173A, subsection 6, paragraph f, Code 2020, is amended to read as follows:

f. Make recommendations for improving collaborations between the child care programs involving the department of human services and programs supporting the education and development of young children including but not limited to the federal head start program; the statewide preschool program for four-year-old young children; and the early childhood, at-risk, and other early education programs administered by the department of education.

Sec. 3. Section 256C.1, subsections 1 and 4, Code 2020, are amended to read as follows:

1. "Approved local program" means a school district's program for four-year-old young children approved by the department of education to provide high quality preschool instruction.

4. "Preschool program" means the statewide preschool program for four-year-old young children created in accordance with this chapter.

Sec. 4. Section 256C.2, Code 2020, is amended to read as follows:

256C.2 Statewide preschool program for four-year-old young children — purpose.

1. A statewide preschool program for four-year-old young children is established. The purpose of the preschool program is to provide an opportunity for all young children in the state to enter school ready to learn by expanding voluntary access to quality preschool curricula for all children who are four years old.

2. The state board shall adopt rules in accordance with
chapter 17A as necessary to implement the preschool program as provided in this chapter.

Sec. 5. Section 256C.3, subsection 1, paragraphs a and b, Code 2020, are amended to read as follows:

a. A child who is a resident of Iowa and who is four years of age on or before September 15 of a school year shall be eligible to enroll in the preschool program under this chapter. For school budget years beginning July 1, 2021, July 1, 2022, and July 1, 2023, a child who is a resident of Iowa and who reaches five years of age on or after March 15 but on or before September 15 of the calendar year during which the school year begins shall be eligible to enroll in the preschool program under this chapter if the school district elects to enroll children who are five years of age for the three-year period. For school districts that elect to enroll children who are five years of age during such three-year period, a child who enrolled as a four-year-old may enroll again as a five-year-old. However, if insufficient space is available in a preschool program for all eligible children, priority for enrollment shall be given to children who are four years of age on or before September 15 of a school year. If such a child is enrolled under this chapter, the child shall be considered to be of compulsory attendance age as provided in section 299.1A, subsection 3.

b. If space and funding are available, including funding from another school district account or fund from which preschool program expenditures are authorized by law, a school district approved to participate in the preschool program may enroll and pay the cost of attendance for a younger or older child in the preschool program who does not satisfy the requirements under paragraph “a”; however, the child shall not be counted for state funding purposes.

Sec. 6. Section 256C.3, subsection 4, paragraphs b and c, Code 2020, are amended to read as follows:

b. Subject to implementation of chapter 28E agreements
between a school district and community-based providers of services to four-year-old children and eligible five-year-old children, a four-year-old child or eligible five-year-old child who is enrolled in a child care center or child development home licensed or registered under chapter 237A, or in an existing public or private preschool program, shall be eligible for services provided by the school district’s local preschool program.

c. A school district shall participate in data collection and performance measurement processes and reporting as defined by rule. In addition to preschool program data collection, the school district data collected by the department shall include data related to the number and birth month and year of pupils who enroll in kindergarten, including all-day, half-day, or transitional kindergarten programs, for more than one school year and whether those pupils previously or concurrently enrolled in the school district’s approved local program. To the extent feasible, the data reporting relating to kindergarten program enrollment shall be done in a manner so as to avoid duplication of individual pupil data within multiple categories.

Sec. 7. Section 256C.3, subsection 4, Code 2020, is amended by adding the following new paragraph:

NEW PARAGRAPH. e. For budget years beginning on or after July 1, 2021, each approved local program shall provide consultation services for parents or guardians of children enrolled in the approved local program and parents or guardians of children eligible to enroll in the approved local program to assist parents or guardians in assessing the child’s readiness for enrollment in kindergarten or in a preschool program, as applicable.

Sec. 8. Section 256C.4, subsection 2, Code 2020, is amended to read as follows:

2. Eligible student enrollment.

a. To be included as an eligible student in the enrollment
count of the preschool programming provided by a school district approved to participate in the preschool program, a child must be four years of age by September 15 requirements of section 256C.3, subsection 1, paragraph “a” in the base year and be attending the school district’s approved local program.

b. The enrollment count of eligible students shall not include a child who is included in the enrollment count determined under section 257.6 or a child who is served by a program already receiving state or federal funds for the purpose of the provision of four-year-old or five-year-old preschool programming while the child is being served by the program. Such preschool programming includes but is not limited to child development assistance programs provided under chapter 256A, special education programs provided under section 256B.9, school ready children grant programs and other programs provided under chapter 256I, and federal head start programs and the services funded by Tit. I of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

Sec. 9. Section 298A.2, subsection 2, paragraph a, subparagraph (1), Code 2020, is amended to read as follows:

1. An approved local program under the statewide preschool program for four-year-old young children under chapter 256C.

Sec. 10. Section 298A.2, subsection 2, paragraph c, subparagraph (1), Code 2020, is amended to read as follows:

1. Start-up costs for an approved local program under the statewide preschool program for four-year-old young children under chapter 256C.

Sec. 11. Section 299.1A, subsection 3, Code 2020, is amended to read as follows:

3. A child who has reached the age of four by September 15 or five and who is enrolled in the statewide preschool program under chapter 256C shall be considered to be of compulsory attendance age unless the parent or guardian of the child submits written notice to the school district implementing the
program of the parent's or guardian's intent to remove the child from enrollment in the preschool program.

Sec. 12. APPLICABILITY. This Act applies to school budget years beginning on or after July 1, 2021.

EXPLANATION

The inclusion of this explanation does not constitute agreement with the explanation's substance by the members of the general assembly.

The statewide preschool program for four-year-old children under Code chapter 256C provides that a child who is a resident of Iowa and is four years of age on or before September 15 of a school year shall be eligible to enroll in the preschool program. Additionally, to be included as an eligible student in the enrollment count of the preschool programming for state funding purposes, a child must be four years of age by September 15 in the base year and attending the school district's approved local program.

For school budget years beginning July 1, 2021, July 1, 2022, and July 1, 2023, this bill expands the eligibility and state funding provisions of the statewide preschool program for four-year-old children under Code chapter 256C to also include five-year-old children who reach the age of five on or after March 15 but on or before September 15 of the calendar year during which the school year begins if the school district elects to enroll such children. For school districts that elect to enroll children who are five years of age during such three-year period, a child who enrolled as a four-year-old may enroll again as a five-year-old. However, if insufficient space is available in a preschool program for all eligible children, priority for enrollment shall be given to children who are four years of age on or before September 15 of a school year.

References to four-year-old children in the program named in Code chapter 256C and in related Code provisions are changed to "young children" or expanded to also refer to eligible five-year-old children and Code section 299.1A relating to
compulsory education is also modified to reflect changes made in the bill. The bill also requires each approved local program to provide consultation services for parents or guardians of children enrolled in the approved local program and parents or guardians of children eligible to enroll in the approved local program to assist parents or guardians in assessing the child's readiness for enrollment in kindergarten or in a preschool program, as applicable. The bill modifies provisions relating to school district participation in data collection and performance measurement processes under the statewide preschool program. The bill applies to school budget years beginning on or after July 1, 2021.