

CHAPTER 1174

STATEWIDE VOLUNTARY PRESCHOOL PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY AND FUNDING

H.F. 2493

AN ACT relating to the statewide preschool program by modifying provisions relating to eligibility, funding, and compulsory attendance and including applicability provisions.

Be It Enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Iowa:

Section 1. Section 256C.1, subsections 1 and 4, Code 2026, 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. 2. Section 256C.1, Code 2026, is amended by adding the following new subsection: **NEW SUBSECTION.** 7. “*Young children*” means children who are four years of age or who are five years of age on specified dates as provided in section 256C.3, subsection 1, paragraph “a”.

Sec. 3. Section 256C.2, Code 2026, 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. 4. Section 256C.3, subsection 1, paragraphs a and b, Code 2026, are amended to read as follows:

a. A child who is a resident of Iowa and who is either four years of age on or before September 15 of a school year or 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 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. If a child enrolled in the preschool program pursuant to this paragraph has been counted for state funding purposes under this chapter for a prior school year, the child shall not be counted for state funding purposes.

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. 5. Section 256C.3, subsection 4, paragraph b, Code 2026, is 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.

Sec. 6. Section 256C.4, subsection 2, Code 2026, 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~~ satisfy the 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. 7. Section 298A.2, subsection 2, paragraph a, subparagraph (1), Code 2026, 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. 8. Section 298A.2, subsection 2, paragraph c, subparagraph (1), Code 2026, 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. 9. Section 299.1A, subsection 3, Code 2026, 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. 10. APPLICABILITY. This Act applies to school budget years beginning on or after July 1, 2027.

Approved June 2, 2026