

SENATE BILL 2595

By Hensley

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49,
Chapter 6, Part 1, relative to pre-kindergarten.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 49-6-101, is amended by deleting subsection (f).

SECTION 2. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 49-6-104, is amended by deleting the section and substituting:

(a) As used in this part, "at-risk children" means:

(1) Children of a household income that meets the eligibility requirements for free or reduced-price lunch as determined pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1771; or

(2) Dependent children, as defined by § 49-7-102(c), who are four (4) years of age whose parent was killed, died as a direct result of injuries received, or has been officially reported as being either a prisoner of war or missing in action while serving honorably as a member of the United States armed forces during a qualifying period of armed conflict as defined by § 49-7-102(c), or was formerly a prisoner of war or missing in action under such circumstances, who presents the following:

(A) Official certification from the United States government that the parent veteran was killed or died as a direct result of injuries received while serving honorably as a member of the United States armed forces during a qualifying period of armed conflict; or

(B) Official certification from the United States government that the parent veteran has been officially reported as being a prisoner of war or missing in action while serving honorably as a member of the United States armed forces during a qualifying period of armed conflict or was formerly a prisoner of war or missing in action under such circumstances, as appropriate, within one hundred eighty (180) days prior to applying for services under this section.

(b) An LEA may establish a voluntary pre-kindergarten program that serves at-risk children residing in the geographic area served by the LEA who are four (4) years of age on or before August 15 in accordance with this section.

(c) If an insufficient number of at-risk children who are four (4) years of age are enrolled to fill a voluntary pre-kindergarten program, then, at the LEA's discretion, a child who is four (4) years of age on or before August 15 and who resides in the geographic area served by the LEA or an at-risk child who is three (3) years of age on or before August 15 and who resides in the geographic area served by the LEA may enroll in the program.

(d) A voluntary pre-kindergarten program established pursuant to this section must:

(1) Consist of a maximum class size of twenty (20);

(2) Have at least one (1) licensed teacher per classroom who is certified in early childhood education;

(3) Have at least one (1) educational assistant per classroom who holds a child development associate credential or associate degree in early childhood education, or who is actively working toward acquiring such credentials; provided, however, that if a person with such credentials is unavailable, then

educational assistants who hold a high school diploma and who have relevant experience working with children in pre-kindergarten or other early childhood programs may be employed to satisfy this requirement;

(4) Provide a minimum of five and one-half (5.5) hours of quality instructional time per day;

(5) Use an educational, age-appropriate curriculum that is aligned with the early learning standards approved by the department of education and that includes, at a minimum, literacy, writing, math, and science skills;

(6) Have a developmental learning program that addresses the cognitive, physical, emotional, social, and communication areas of child development;

(7) Meet the criteria for a "highly qualified pre-kindergarten program," as identified by the department of education; and

(8) Comply with the state board of education's rules and policies related to early childhood education and pre-kindergarten programs.

SECTION 3. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 49-6-108(6), is amended by deleting "at risk students" and substituting "at-risk children".

SECTION 4. This act takes effect July 1, 2022, the public welfare requiring it.