



Date: March 1, 2023
To: Chair Campion and members of the Senate Committee on Education
From: Anna Brouillette, Policy and Programs Director, Dora Levinson, Research and Data Director, Dr. Morgan Crossman, Executive Director, Building Bright Futures
Re: S.56: An act relating to Child Care and Early Childhood Education - Considerations for Universal Prekindergarten Education Study Language

Building Bright Future's Role in Vermont's Early Childhood System

Building Bright Futures (BBF) is Vermont's early childhood public-private partnership charged under Title 33, Chapter 46 and the federal Head Start Act to serve as Vermont's Early Childhood State Advisory Council, the mechanism used to advise the Governor and legislature on the status of children in the prenatal period through age eight and their families. State statute charges BBF with maintaining and monitoring the vision and strategic plan for Vermont's Early Childhood System. BBF's mission is to improve the well-being of children and families in Vermont by using evidence to inform policy and bringing voices together across sectors and within regions to discuss critical challenges and problem-solve.

The Building Bright Futures State Advisory Council (SAC) does not directly support or oppose any specific proposal or bill. Instead, our role is to convene and elevate the voices of families and early childhood stakeholders; monitor the system by identifying and provide high-quality up-to-date data to inform policy and decision-making.

A Potential Pre-K Study in Vermont

As your committee reviews S. 56 and develops language for a potential study related to Universal Prekindergarten Education or Pre-K, we want to offer some potential questions and considerations based on our extensive research and compilation of data to inform early childhood policy over the past five years..

We have attached a preliminary set of study topics and questions for your consideration. The topics and questions are broken down into three potential categories of study: 1) examining the S.56 proposal of transitioning to delivering pre-K to 4-year-olds in school-based settings only, 2) expanding the current mixed-delivery model of UPK (increasing hours/dosage), and 3) examining the current mixed-delivery model. When the committee develops a plan for studying potential expansion of the state's universal pre-K program, we encourage you to consider the following characteristics and challenges associated with the state's early childhood system and the needs of children and their families holistically.

Key Questions and Considerations

The attached document outlines questions focused on academic outcomes, demand, capacity, enrollment, cost, program type, quality, workforce, cost, timing, and physical infrastructure. Below are four areas of potential questions that may not have been highlighted in previous testimony and discussion.

Families of young children often need more hours of care than the traditional school-day and school-hour offer. Vermont's existing system for out-of-school time care (afterschool, summer and vacation care/camps) is currently at capacity and unable to meet the needs of all families who need it.



- What capacity (physical space, workforce, transportation etc) needs to be built in developmentally appropriate afterschool and out-of-school-time care to fill the gaps? How does this vary by region? (for each of the potential models of pre-K)
- How are we ensuring that families are able to seamlessly access out-of-school time care in addition to universal pre-K hours?

Head Start currently provides high-quality services, resources, and supports to 3 and 4-year-olds (and their families) including, but not limited to pre-K (in addition to services for prenatal parents and infants through Early Head Start). Per the Head Start Program Performance Standards, all program options must deliver the full range of services including: education and child development, health, family and community engagement, additional services for children with disabilities, and transition services.

- What are the specific implications of removing 4-year-olds from private pre-K programs on Vermont’s federal Head Start (and associated Early Head Start) funding?
- What are the implications for 4-year-olds and their families currently receiving or requiring high-quality wraparound services by Head Start?

Vermont’s mixed-delivery system has long been the norm in Vermont and across the country, and for reasons articulated by national experts in Senate Health and Welfare on February 10th, it continues to be a foundational commitment of many early childhood stakeholders. Stakeholder feedback and previous research suggests that Vermont’s mixed-delivery universal pre-K is a bright spot, and that deviating from this model would require overwhelming evidence that doing so is best for young children and their families.

- What is the true cost of pre-K in each model?
- What are the academic outcomes for children in each setting?
- How many hours are the appropriate “dosage” to make universally accessible?
- How can we build the most equitable system and ensure that all families who want their children to access pre-K are able to?
- Where are these hours delivered?

Under the federal IDEA law, children with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) should receive services in the least restrictive environment to the “maximum extent appropriate”.

- What are the current numbers of 3 and 4-year-old children on IEPs receiving services in public and private settings?
- How many children on IEPs are receiving the identified dosage of services?
- How would removing 3-year-olds on IEPs from a pre-K setting impact their ability to receive services in the least restrictive environment as required by IDEA?



Additional Resources

We encourage you to review the attachments to our testimony which provide additional data and resources related to universal pre-K in Vermont including:

- [Existing data and publications on Vermont's UPK system](#)
 - Including legislatively mandated reports and studies
- [Stakeholder feedback on S.56, including questions regarding UPK](#)
- [Questions and considerations for potential further study of UPK](#) based on stakeholder feedback and currently available data and resources

Our team continues to be available to discuss matters related to universal pre-K, S. 56, and the broader Vermont early childhood system.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Anna Brouillette in black ink.

Anna Brouillette
Policy and Program
Director

Handwritten signature of Dora Levinson in black ink.

Dora Levinson
Research and Data
Director

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Dr. Morgan Crossman
Executive Director