

2025 -- H 5596

LC001966

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2025

A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- RHODE ISLAND PREKINDERGARTEN EDUCATION ACT

Introduced By: Representatives Shallcross Smith, Ackerman, Fellela, Perez, Baginski, Place, and Fogarty

Date Introduced: February 26, 2025

Referred To: House Education

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 16-87 of the General Laws entitled "Rhode Island Prekindergarten
2 Education Act" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following section:

3 **16-87-8. Prekindergarten seat finder.**

4 (a) Purpose. The purpose of this section is to establish a statewide prekindergarten seat
5 finder to support families in accessing high-quality early childhood education programs for three
6 (3) and four (4) year old children. This system will provide real-time availability, eligibility
7 screening, and application support for families seeking licensed early learning providers.

8 (b) Establishment of a prekindergarten finder platform development.

9 (1) The department of elementary and secondary education shall procure or develop and
10 maintain a statewide digital prekindergarten seat finder platform to help families locate and secure
11 Pre-K program placements.

12 (2) Functionality. The finder shall include the following:

13 (i) Provide real-time availability of licensed early learning programs serving three (3) and
14 four (4) year old children;

15 (ii) Include a searchable directory of providers with filters for location, hours, quality
16 ratings, tuition, language, tour availability, parent ratings, and subsidy eligibility;

17 (iii) Offer an eligibility screener for state and federally funded Pre-K programs; including
18 Head Start, state preschool, and mixed-delivery models;

1 (iv) Enable families to apply directly for programs or join waitlists through a centralized
2 intake system; and

3 (v) Ensure accessibility for non-English speaking families and those with disabilities.

4 (c) Provider participation and data requirements.

5 (1) All licensed Pre-K providers, including state-funded, private, and nonprofit programs,
6 must participate in the finder platform.

7 (2) Providers must update availability at least weekly and report key program details,
8 including:

9 (i) Enrollment openings by age group;

10 (ii) Tuition rates and subsidy acceptance;

11 (iii) Program quality indicators (QRIS ratings, national accreditation status);

12 (iv) Special services offered including, but not limited to, dual-language, inclusive
13 education, and extended care;

14 (v) Parental ratings; and

15 (vi) Tour availability.

16 (3) The state shall integrate the finder with the subsidy eligibility system to facilitate
17 streamlined enrollment for families using childcare assistance or Pre-K grants.

18 (d) Parental support and outreach. The department shall conduct outreach campaigns to
19 ensure families, particularly those in underserved communities, are aware of and can access the
20 finder.

21 (e) Implementation. The finder shall be fully operational within twelve (12) months of
22 enactment. The department shall report annually to the speaker of the house and senate president
23 on usage rates, enrollment trends, and provider participation.

24 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

=====
LC001966
=====

EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
A N A C T
RELATING TO EDUCATION -- RHODE ISLAND PREKINDERGARTEN EDUCATION
ACT

- 1 This act would establish a prekindergarten seat finder to support families in accessing high
- 2 quality early childhood education programs for three (3) and four (4) year old children.
- 3 This act would take effect upon passage.

=====
LC001966
=====