

**An Act Ensuring High-Quality Pre-Kindergarten Education [S.265](#)
An Act Relative to Grants for High-Quality Early Education [H.551](#)**

Lead Sponsors: Representative Alice Peisch and Senator Sal DiDomenico

Massachusetts has a significant and persistent achievement gap, evident long before children enter school. Too many children show up for school already behind and too many of them will never catch up. It's time to level the playing field for Massachusetts children.

Experts agree that high-quality Pre-K has a short- and long-term impact on young children's educational, social and health outcomes. Preventing problems now, rather than remediating them later, is a cost-effective investment that benefits children and taxpayers alike. High-quality Pre-K helps establish a strong foundation for children's learning in K-12, but currently an estimated 40% of 3- and 4-year-olds are not enrolled in any formal preschool program.

This legislation has been filed to help close the achievement gap and ensure that all Massachusetts children have the opportunity to succeed in school and in life. The legislation builds upon the Commonwealth's strong policy foundation for early education, including the ongoing work of the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE.) It capitalizes on the momentum for Pre-K, including the state's \$15 million federal Preschool Expansion Grant (2015-2019) and state-funded preschool planning and implementation grants (Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative, budget line item 3000-6025). Together these grants have catalyzed innovation in 18 high-needs communities across the commonwealth. Now is the time to sustain and grow that work, with a comprehensive plan for preschool expansion.

About the Bill

Both the House and Senate version of the bills provide access to high-quality preschool programs for children in underperforming school districts through a targeted, phased-in approach. This comprehensive plan is modeled after the New Jersey Abbott preschool program, which has helped to narrow the achievement gap in those communities.

Key components include:

- A focus on preschool-age children (from 2 years and 9 months to kindergarten eligible);
- A commitment to the mixed-delivery system of public and private Pre-K providers;
- A multi-year phase-in of funding, beginning with "ready communities" that have state-approved implementation plans.
- Priority for communities with large percentages of high-needs students;
- Adequate funding to ensure program quality and teacher salaries and qualifications comparable to the K-12 system;
- Program quality requirements aligned with federal Preschool Expansion Grant standards, including student- to-teacher ratios of 10 to 1, with no more than 20 Pre-K students, teacher qualifications and compensation, inclusion of children with disabilities, developmentally appropriate instruction, and family engagement;

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