

1 AN ACT concerning education.

2 Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,
3 represented in the General Assembly:

4 Section 1. Short title. This Act may be cited as the
5 Voluntary Access to Preschool Act.

6 Section 5. Purpose. Research demonstrates that
7 participation in a quality preschool program has a positive
8 impact on a child's intellectual, emotional, social, and
9 physical development, predicting favorable performance well
10 into the child's school career. To ensure that all children
11 in this State are prepared for school, there should be a
12 policy of access to preschool for children ages 3 to 5 years
13 who are residents of this State and whose parents or
14 guardians want them to participate.

15 Section 10. Policy established. A policy of voluntary
16 universal access to preschool is hereby established. The
17 following are the components of the policy:

18 (1) Children who are at least 3 years of age but
19 less than 5 years of age who are residents of this State
20 and whose parents or guardians want them to participate
21 shall have access to preschool.

22 (2) Universal voluntary access to preschool shall
23 be phased in over time.

24 (3) Preschool early education shall be available in
25 a variety of settings, and a range of providers,
26 including schools, child care settings, and Head Start
27 programs, shall be allowed to directly receive State
28 preschool funds.

29 (4) All teachers of preschool early education
30 programs shall hold early childhood education

1 certificates issued under Section 21-2.1 of the School
2 Code.

3 (5) Families shall be offered an array of preschool
4 service options and schedules that meet their varied
5 scheduling needs.

6 (6) Parents shall have opportunities to be involved
7 in their children's early learning experiences and to
8 participate in parent education activities.

9 (7) Periodic assessments shall be conducted to
10 improve preschool early education programs and
11 demonstrate school readiness results.

12 Section 15. Task Force. In order to implement the
13 policy of voluntary universal access to preschool that is to
14 be phased in over time, a broad-based Task Force on Voluntary
15 Access to Preschool is hereby created within the Office of
16 the Governor to develop and deliver an implementation plan to
17 the General Assembly by January 1, 2002. This Task Force
18 shall have statewide representation and shall consist of the
19 following members:

20 (1) Two representatives of the Governor's Office,
21 appointed by the Governor.

22 (2) Four members from the House of Representatives,
23 with 2 members appointed by the Speaker of the House and
24 2 members appointed by the Minority Leader of the House.

25 (3) Four members of the Senate, with 2 members
26 appointed by the President of the Senate and 2 members
27 appointed by the Minority Leader of the Senate.

28 (4) The Director of Human Services or his or her
29 designee.

30 (5) The Director of Children and Family Services or
31 his or her designee.

32 (6) The State Superintendent of Education or his or
33 her designee.

1 (7) One member representing the Illinois Head Start
2 Association, appointed by the Governor.

3 (8) One member representing the Chicago Board of
4 Education, appointed by the Governor.

5 (9) Eighteen members representing the early
6 education community, including administrators, teachers,
7 child care centers and homes, higher education
8 instructors, parents, business, labor, and education
9 advocates, appointed by the Governor.

10 The Governor may, at his or her discretion, appoint
11 individuals representing the U.S. Department of Health and
12 Human Services, Region V. One member of the Task Force shall
13 be selected by the Governor to serve as the chairperson of
14 the Task Force.

15 Section 20. Duties of Task Force. The Task Force shall
16 design a framework of key preschool program components to
17 ensure that all children enter school ready to learn. The
18 plan must include, at a minimum, all of the following
19 elements:

20 (1) Recommendations for what preschool funds will
21 pay for and how funds will be distributed.

22 (2) Eligible agencies to apply and operate
23 preschool programs.

24 (3) Cost estimates and methods of funding, phase-in
25 plans, and funding priorities.

26 (4) Program governance structures.

27 (5) Standards.

28 (6) Plans for assessing results.

29 (7) How programs might address children's
30 comprehensive needs.

31 The Task Force shall widely gather information and
32 recommendations for consideration from parents, civic groups,
33 and others with an interest in young children and their

1 families.

2 Section 999. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon

3 becoming law.