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**HOUSE BILL 2282**

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**State of Washington**

**69th Legislature**

**2026 Regular Session**

**By** Representative Bernbaum

Prefiled 01/07/26. Read first time 01/12/26. Referred to Committee on Appropriations.

1 AN ACT Relating to supporting the implementation of transition to  
2 kindergarten programs; and amending RCW 28A.300.072.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 **Sec. 1.** RCW 28A.300.072 and 2025 c 342 s 1 are each amended to  
5 read as follows:

6 (1) The intent of the legislature is to continue and rename  
7 transitional kindergarten as the transition to kindergarten program  
8 and that the program be established in statute with the goal of  
9 assisting eligible children in need of additional preparation to be  
10 successful kindergarten students in the following school year. The  
11 transition to kindergarten program is not part of the state's  
12 statutory program of basic education under RCW 28A.150.200.

13 (2)(a) The office of the superintendent of public instruction  
14 shall administer the transition to kindergarten program and shall  
15 adopt rules under chapter 34.05 RCW for the administration of, the  
16 allocation of state funding for, and minimum standards and  
17 requirements for the transition to kindergarten program in accordance  
18 with this section.

19 (b) School districts, charter schools as allowed by subsection  
20 (7) of this section, and state-tribal education compact schools  
21 operating a transition to kindergarten program shall adopt policies

1 regarding eligibility, recruitment, and enrollment for this program  
2 that, at a minimum, meet the requirements of subsection (3) of this  
3 section.

4 (3) The rules adopted under subsection (2) of this section must  
5 include, at a minimum, the following requirements for school  
6 districts, charter schools as allowed by subsection (7) of this  
7 section, and state-tribal education compact schools operating a  
8 transition to kindergarten program:

9 (a)(i) A limitation on program enrollment to eligible children.  
10 Eligible children include only those who:

11 (A) Have been determined to benefit from additional preparation  
12 for kindergarten; and

13 (B) Are at least four years old by August 31st of the school year  
14 they enroll in the transition to kindergarten program;

15 (ii) A requirement, as practicable, for school districts, charter  
16 schools as allowed by subsection (7) of this section, and state-  
17 tribal education compact schools to prioritize families with the  
18 lowest incomes and children most in need for additional preparation  
19 to be successful in kindergarten when enrolling eligible children in  
20 a transition to kindergarten program;

21 (iii) Access to the transition to kindergarten program does not  
22 constitute an individual entitlement for any particular child.

23 (b) Except for children who have been excused from participation  
24 by their parents or legal guardians, a requirement that the  
25 Washington kindergarten inventory of developing skills as established  
26 by RCW 28A.655.080 be administered to all eligible children enrolled  
27 in a transition to kindergarten program at the beginning of the  
28 child's enrollment in the program and at least one more time during  
29 the school year.

30 (c) A requirement that all eligible children enrolled in a  
31 transition to kindergarten program be assigned a statewide student  
32 identifier and that the transition to kindergarten program be  
33 considered a separate class or course for the purposes of data  
34 reporting requirements in RCW 28A.320.175.

35 (d) A requirement that a local child care and early learning  
36 needs assessment is conducted before beginning or expanding a  
37 transition to kindergarten program that considers the existing  
38 availability and affordability of early learning providers, such as  
39 the early childhood education and assistance programs, head start  
40 programs, and licensed child care centers and family home providers

1 in the region. Data available through the regionalized data dashboard  
2 maintained by the department of children, youth, and families or any  
3 other appropriate sources may be used to inform the needs assessment  
4 required by this subsection.

5 (e) (i) A requirement that school districts, charter schools as  
6 allowed by subsection (7) of this section, and state-tribal education  
7 compact schools adhere to guidelines, as developed by the office of  
8 the superintendent of public instruction, related to:

9 (A) Best practices for site readiness of facilities that are used  
10 for the program;

11 (B) Developmentally appropriate curricula designed to assist in  
12 maintaining high quality programs; and

13 (C) Professional development opportunities.

14 (ii) The office of the superintendent of public instruction must  
15 develop a process for conducting site visits of any school district,  
16 charter school as allowed by subsection (7) of this section, or  
17 state-tribal education compact school operating a transition to  
18 kindergarten program and provide feedback on elements listed in this  
19 subsection (3) (e).

20 (f) A prohibition on charging tuition or other fees to state-  
21 funded eligible children for enrollment in a transition to  
22 kindergarten program.

23 (g) A prohibition on establishing a policy of excluding an  
24 eligible child due only to the presence of a disability.

25 (4) (a) The office of the superintendent of public instruction, in  
26 collaboration with the department of children, youth, and families,  
27 shall develop statewide coordinated eligibility, recruitment,  
28 enrollment, and selection best practices and provide technical  
29 assistance to those implementing a transition to kindergarten program  
30 to support connections with local early learning providers.

31 (b) School districts, charter schools as allowed by subsection  
32 (7) of this section, and state-tribal education compact schools must  
33 consider the best practices developed under this subsection (4) when  
34 adopting the policies required under subsection (2) (b) of this  
35 section.

36 (5) Nothing in this section prohibits school districts, charter  
37 schools as allowed by subsection (7) of this section, and state-  
38 tribal education compact schools from blending or collocating a  
39 transition to kindergarten program with other early learning  
40 programs.

1 (6) (a) Funding for the transition to kindergarten program must be  
2 based on the following:

3 (i) The distribution formula established under RCW 28A.150.260  
4 (4) (a), (5), (6), (8), and (10) (a) and (b), calculated using the  
5 actual number of annual average full-time equivalent eligible  
6 children enrolled in the program. A transition to kindergarten child  
7 must be counted as a kindergarten student for purposes of the funding  
8 calculations referenced in this subsection, but must be reported  
9 separately.

10 (ii) The distribution formula developed in RCW 28A.160.150  
11 through 28A.160.192, calculated using reported ridership for eligible  
12 children enrolled in the program.

13 (b) Beginning in the 2025-26 school year, the annual average  
14 full-time equivalent eligible children enrolled in the program funded  
15 in (a) of this subsection may not exceed the state-funded annual  
16 average full-time equivalent specified in the omnibus appropriations  
17 act.

18 (i) During the 2025-26 and 2026-27 school years, the office of  
19 the superintendent of public instruction must prioritize funding for  
20 programs funded under (a) of this subsection that operated during the  
21 2024-25 school year.

22 (ii) During the 2026-27 school year, the office of the  
23 superintendent of public instruction must also prioritize funding for  
24 programs funded under (a) of this subsection that:

25 (A) Did not operate in the 2024-25 and 2025-26 school years; and

26 (B) Submitted a notification of intent to implement and  
27 administer a transition to kindergarten program to the office of the  
28 superintendent of public instruction before June 1, 2025.

29 (c) Funding provided for the transition to kindergarten program  
30 is not part of the state's statutory program of basic education under  
31 RCW 28A.150.200 and must be expended only for the support of  
32 operating a transition to kindergarten program.

33 (7) Charter schools authorized under RCW 28A.710.080(2) are  
34 immediately permitted to operate a transition to kindergarten program  
35 under this section. Beginning with the 2025-26 school year, any  
36 charter school authorized under RCW 28A.710.080 (1) or (2) is  
37 permitted to operate a transition to kindergarten program under this  
38 section.

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