



# HOUSE BILL 556: Office of Early Childhood Education.

2017-2018 General Assembly

<b>Committee:</b>	House Education - K-12	<b>Date:</b>	April 20, 2017
<b>Introduced by:</b>	Reps. Horn, Hurley, Lucas, L. Bell	<b>Prepared by:</b>	Drupti Chauhan
<b>Analysis of:</b>	First Edition		Committee Counsel

**OVERVIEW:** House Bill 556 would establish the Office of Early Childhood Education that would be housed administratively in the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) but exercise its powers independently of DPI.

**BILL ANALYSIS:** House Bill 556 would establish the Office of Early Childhood Education (Office) housed administratively in DPI but it would exercise its powers independently of DPI.

The Office would have staff that would include an associate superintendent who would also be the chief academic officer as well as other professional and administrative personnel needed to carry out the functions of the Office. The associate superintendent would be appointed by the Superintendent of Public Instruction (Superintendent) and could be removed by the Superintendent as well. The appointment must be made within 60 days of the bill becoming law.

**Powers and Duties** – The Office would have the following powers and duties:

- Developing and implementing a plan for a coordinated system of early care, education, and child development services with a focus on program outcomes for children from birth to 8 years of age. This would include:
  - Recommendations for the Superintendent on organizational changes within DPI including projected efficiencies to be realized through the operation of a new organizational structure for the coordination of early childhood programs within DPI.
  - The coordination of the administration of the NC Infant-Toddler Program and the NC Pre-K Program.
  - An early childhood information system that facilitates and encourages the sharing of data between and among early childhood service providers and State agencies.
  - An early childhood accountability plan that includes identification of appropriate population indicators and performance measures of the identifying markers of early success of children.
- Implementing a statewide longitudinal evaluation of the educational progress of children from prekindergarten programs through grade 3.
- Collaborating with DPI, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), and other relevant State agencies to achieve a coordinated system of early care, education, and child development services for children from birth to 8 years of age.

Karen Cochrane-Brown  
Director



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**Quarterly Report** – The Office would report quarterly to the Governor, the State Board of Education, the Superintendent, and the Secretary of DHHS on the progress of the duties and responsibilities of the Office. The initial quarterly report must be submitted by May 15, 2018.

**Study** – The Office must conduct a study of the governance of State government-wide management and provision of services for early childhood education and development and the role of a centralized agency or office that would be responsible for early childhood-related issues. The Office must make recommendations to the General Assembly on alternative organizational structures to achieve greater efficiency and effective delivery of early childhood services, including consolidation and restructuring of State agency divisions and offices in DPI and DHHS into a centralized agency or office. The study must consider:

- Delivery of services to young children and their families to ensure optimal health, safety, and learning for the children.
- Collaboration and sharing of data necessary to perform assessments and longitudinal analysis across early childhood education and development services.
- Coordination of home visitation services across various programs.
- Access to information and technical assistance for those seeking early education and child development programs and services.
- Available federal funding for State early care and education and child development programs and services.
- Available technical assistance to early care and education program providers and coordination of a comprehensive system of professional development for these providers.
- Integration of early childhood care and education and special education services.
- Areas of duplication in monitoring and the evaluation of early care and education programs and services.
- Coordination and support of public and private partnerships for early childhood initiatives.
- Various past reports by DPI and DHHS on early education programs.

By March 15, 2018, the Office must report on this study and the progress on the development and implementation of a plan for a coordinated system of early care and education to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services, and the Joint Legislative Commission on Governmental Operations.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** The bill would become effective July 1, 2017 only if funds are appropriated in a Current Appropriations Act for the 2017-2018 fiscal year to implement the provisions of the act.

**BACKGROUND:** The Office of Early Learning currently exists in the Department of Public Instruction and focuses on prekindergarten through grade 3. It currently combines the staff at DPI in both primary education and prekindergarten education.