



## Missouri House of Representatives

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### **Missouri House Passes HB 1486, Propelling Early Childhood Education Initiative Forward**

**JEFFERSON CITY, Mo.** – With an emphasis on childhood development, the Missouri House has successfully passed HB 1486, sponsored by Representative Brenda Shields. This bill marks a significant stride in enhancing educational opportunities for children aged three to five years old, particularly those eligible for free and reduced-price lunch, attending early childhood education programs operated by school districts or charter schools.

HB 1486 aims to facilitate inclusion of children in these programs within the calculation of average daily attendance, with a provision to ensure that the total number of eligible pupils does not exceed 4% of the total attendance of pupils aged five to 18 who are also eligible for free and reduced-price lunch. Notably, starting from the 2024-25 school year, the bill mandates the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to remit funding to districts and charter schools based on attendance figures of eligible pupils, aligning with the state's adequacy targets.

Proponents of the bill highlight the critical importance of early childhood education in augmenting the overall educational landscape of Missouri. They emphasize the substantial economic returns associated with investing in early childhood education, which directly correlates with a reduction in future crime rates. Moreover, with certain regions facing a shortage of early childcare providers, HB 1486 is poised to expand the availability of these vital programs, particularly benefiting underserved areas across the state.

"Caring for our youngest learners isn't just an investment in their future—it's an investment in Missouri's future. HB 1486's passage underscores our commitment to ensuring every child, regardless of background, has access to quality early childhood education," Shields, R-St. Joseph, said. By providing resources to expand these crucial programs, we're not only nurturing the minds of our children but also fostering stronger, more resilient communities statewide."

However, despite its noble intentions, the bill has faced opposition from some quarters. Critics argue that increased government support for early childhood education may lead to overreliance on state

intervention from an early age, potentially encroaching upon principles of a free-market economy. Concerns have also been raised regarding disparities in regulations between publicly funded programs and private independent daycares.

“This legislation signifies a pivotal moment in the state's commitment to providing equitable access to quality education for all its young learners,” House Speaker Dean Plocher, R-Des Peres, said. “By expanding access to quality early childhood programs, we're laying the foundation for a brighter future for our state. The Missouri House remains committed to providing equitable educational opportunities and fostering strong communities across Missouri.”

The bill now proceeds to the Senate for further consideration.

*Representative Brenda Kay Shields, a Republican, represents part of Buchanan County (District 11) in the Missouri House of Representatives. She was elected to her first two-year term in November 2018. For more information, please contact Rep. Shields' office at 573-751- 3643 or by email at [Brenda.Shields@House.Mo.Gov](mailto:Brenda.Shields@House.Mo.Gov).*

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