



SPONSOR: Sen. Sturgeon & Sen. Lockman & Rep. Jaques &
Rep. K. Williams
Sens. Cloutier, Hansen, Sokola

DELAWARE STATE SENATE
150th GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SENATE BILL NO. 173

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE UNIVERSAL PRE-K CONSORTIUM.

1 WHEREAS, a strong research base demonstrates that high-quality pre-kindergarten (“pre-K”) benefits all children
2 with lasting impacts on education, mobility, employment, health, and crime; and

3 WHEREAS, economic analyses predict that states that invest in early childhood education stimulate economies
4 with high-achieving workers and spend less money on remedial education, healthcare, and criminal justice, creating an \$11
5 return on every dollar invested; and

6 WHEREAS, new research suggests advantages of universal pre-K programs because diverse, inclusive early
7 childhood learning environments benefit children from all economic, ethnic, and racial backgrounds; and

8 WHEREAS, pre-K more than pays for itself in both the long and short term. Recent studies show a 13% per year
9 return to society on pre-K investments through economic stimulation and savings on remedial education, special education
10 services, health, employment, and criminal justice; and

11 WHEREAS, less than 4% of Delaware 4 year olds are enrolled in State-funded pre-K. Delaware ranks thirty-eight
12 in the nation for pre-K access for 4 year olds; and

13 WHEREAS, 50% of all Delaware 3 and 4 year olds are not enrolled in any pre-K program today; and

14 WHEREAS, based on the Delaware Early Learner Survey observational tool, 1/3 to 1/2 of Delaware children are
15 entering kindergarten without the skills needed for success; and

16 WHEREAS, a 2016 scientific poll found that 86% of likely voters in Delaware support voluntary pre-K for all
17 children; and

18 WHEREAS, according to a 2019 Delaware Readiness Teams survey, 94% percent of parents with children ages 0
19 to 5 agree that Delaware should make free, public pre-K available; and

20 WHEREAS, families report that the price of pre-K is cost prohibitive and causes financial distress. A 2019
21 Delaware Readiness Teams survey found that 55% of parents say they or their partner could get a job, expand access to
22 full-time employment, go back to school, or get more career training if Delaware instituted voluntary, full-day, high quality
23 universal pre-K; and

24 WHEREAS, pre-K has been successfully delivered in a mix of public school, community-based, and Head Start
25 settings and should continue to be delivered in this way to ensure access and options to meet families' needs; and

26 WHEREAS, a significant body of national research supports high standards of delivery of pre-K programming,
27 including developmentally appropriate curriculum and qualified educators.

28 NOW, THEREFORE:

29 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF DELAWARE:

30 Section 1. The Universal Pre-K Consortium ("Consortium") is established to recommend a comprehensive plan for
31 the implementation of a mixed-delivery, non-compulsory public pre-K program for all 4 year olds in this State.

32 Section 2. The Consortium is composed of the following 11 members serving by virtue of position, or a designee
33 appointed by the member:

34 (1) A member of the majority caucus of the Senate, appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate.

35 (2) A member of the minority caucus of the Senate, appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate.

36 (3) A member of the majority caucus of the House of Representatives, appointed by the Speaker of the House
37 of Representative.

38 (4) A member of the minority caucus of the House of Representatives, appointed by the Speaker of the House
39 of Representative.

40 (5) The Secretary of the Department of Education.

41 (6) The Secretary of the Department of Health and Social Services.

42 (7) The President of the Delaware Parent Teacher Association.

43 (8) The President of the Board of Directors of the Delaware School Boards Association.

44 (9) The Executive Director of the Delaware Association for the Education of Young Children.

45 (10) The Chair of the Delaware Early Childhood Council.

46 (11) The President of the Delaware State Education Association.

47 Section 3. Members serving by virtue of position who are granted the ability to designate another individual to
48 attend a Consortium meeting must provide the designation in writing to the chair of the Consortium. An individual
49 attending a meeting for a member serving by virtue of position has the same duties and rights as the member serving by
50 virtue of position.

51 Section 4. The Secretary of the Senate shall notify the chair of the Consortium's creation and provide the chair
52 with a copy of the legislation creating the Consortium.

53 Section 5. The member of the Senate majority caucus appointed by the President Pro Tempore is the chair of the
54 Consortium.

55 Section 6. The chair of the Consortium is responsible for guiding the administration of the Consortium by, at a
56 minimum, doing all of the following:

57 (1) Notifying the individuals listed Section 2 of this Act of the formation of the Consortium and the need to
58 appoint a member, if applicable.

59 (2) Setting a date, time, and place for the initial organizational meeting.

60 (3) Supervising the preparation and distribution of Consortium meeting notices, agendas, minutes,
61 correspondence, and reports.

62 (4) Sending to the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the
63 Director of the Division of Research of Legislative Council, after the first meeting of the Consortium, a list of the
64 members of the Consortium and the person who appointed them.

65 (5) Providing meeting notices, agendas, and minutes to the Director of the Division of Research of Legislative
66 Council.

67 (6) Ensuring that the final report of the Consortium is submitted to the President Pro Tempore of the Senate
68 and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, with copies to all members of the General Assembly, the Governor,
69 the Director and the Librarian of the Division of Research of Legislative Council, and the Delaware Public Archives.

70 Section 7. The Consortium must hold its first meeting no later than January 31, 2020.

71 Section 8. A quorum of the Consortium is a majority of its members.

72 Section 9. Official action by the Consortium, including making findings and recommendations, requires the
73 approval of a quorum of the Consortium.

74 Section 10. The Consortium may adopt rules necessary for its operation. If the Consortium does not adopt rules or
75 if the adopted rules do not govern a given situation, Mason's Manual of Legislative Procedure controls.

76 Section 11. The Department of Education shall provide reasonable and necessary support staff and materials for
77 the Consortium.

78 Section 12. The chair must compile a report containing a summary of the Consortium's work regarding the
79 comprehensive plan required under Section 1 of this Act, including any findings and recommendations by the Consortium
80 related to the comprehensive plan, and submit the report to the General Assembly, the Governor, and the Director and the
81 Librarian of the Division of Research of Legislative Council no later than January 31, 2021.

82 Section 13. This Act expires on the date the Consortium submits the report required by this Act.

SYNOPSIS

This Act establishes the Universal Pre-K Consortium to recommend a comprehensive plan for the implementation of a mixed-delivery, non-compulsory public pre-kindergarten program for all 4 year olds in this State.

Author: Senator Sturgeon