

STATE OF NEW YORK

10908

IN ASSEMBLY

April 8, 2026

Introduced by M. of A. OTIS, BARRETT -- read once and referred to the Committee on Education

AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to exempting school district providers of special services or programs for preschool students with disabilities from having to obtain program approval from the commissioner of education

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. Paragraph a of subdivision 9 of section 4410 of the education law, as amended by chapter 82 of the laws of 1995, the opening paragraph as amended by section 19 of part A of chapter 56 of the laws of 2012, and subparagraph (iii) as amended by section 57-a of part H of chapter 83 of the laws of 2002, is amended to read as follows:

a. (i) Providers of special services or programs, except where such provider is a school district, shall apply to the commissioner for program approval on a form prescribed by the commissioner; such application shall include, but not be limited to, a listing of the services to be provided, the population to be served, a plan for providing services in the least restrictive environment and a description of its evaluation component, if any. The commissioner shall approve programs in accordance with regulations adopted for such purpose and shall periodically review such programs at which time the commissioner shall provide the municipality in which the program is located or for which the municipality bears fiscal responsibility an opportunity for comment within thirty days of the review. In collaboration with municipalities and representatives of approved programs, the commissioner shall develop procedures for conducting such reviews. Municipalities shall be allowed to participate in such departmental review process. Such review shall be conducted by individuals with appropriate experience as determined by the commissioner and shall be conducted not more than once every three years.

~~[(iii) Commencing July first, nineteen hundred ninety-six and continuing through June thirtieth, two thousand three, a moratorium on the approval of any new or expanded programs in settings which include only preschool children with disabilities is established. Exceptions shall be made for cases in which school districts document a critical need for a new or expanded program in a setting which includes only preschool chil-~~

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [-] is old law to be omitted.

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~~dren with disabilities, to meet the projected demand for services for preschool children in the least restrictive environment. Applications for new or expanded programs may be made directly to the state education department. Nothing herein shall prohibit the commissioner from approving the modification of a full-day program into half-day sessions.]~~

(ii) School district providers of special services or programs shall be exempt from the requirement to apply for program approval pursuant to this subdivision and shall be deemed approved by the commissioner to provide preschool special education programs and services. Additionally, school district providers shall be exempt from the program reapproval process prescribed in subdivision nine-b of this section. Provided, however, that the provision of preschool special education services and programs by school districts shall adhere to the applicable regulatory requirements for approved preschool programs, including program and fiscal standards enumerated in commissioner's regulations. Provided, further, however, that school district providers shall be required to notify the department, on a form prescribed by the commissioner, of the programs and services to be provided prior to the establishment of applicable state reimbursement rates used in contracts with municipalities for the provision of approved special services or programs to a preschool child with a disability.

(iii) Commencing July 1, 1999 the department shall only approve any new or expanded programs in settings which include only preschool children with disabilities, if the applicant can document a critical need for a new or expanded program in a setting which includes only preschool children with disabilities to meet the projected demand for services for preschool children in the least restrictive environment. If the department determines that approval will not be granted, it must notify the applicant, in writing, of its reasons for not granting such approval. The department shall establish guidelines, within 90 days of the effective date of this section which shall state the criteria used to determine if the applicant has demonstrated such a critical need. The department is authorized to consult with the local school district to verify any data submitted.

~~[On December 1, 2003 the commissioner shall submit a report to the board of regents, the majority leader of the senate, the speaker of the assembly and governor evaluating the impact of such moratorium on the availability of preschool special education services. The report shall include: (i) information regarding the number of applications for new programs and program expansions and the disposition of those applications by the commissioner; (ii) an assessment of the projected need for additional classes serving only disabled children and those serving disabled children with their non-disabled peers and in other less restrictive settings; (iii) an assessment of the projected need for additional programs due to program closings in the region, number of children receiving early intervention services and existing waiting lists; (iv) an assessment of the distance that children must be transported to receive preschool special education services; (v) an evaluation of the programmatic performance and cost-effectiveness of existing programs; (vi) recommendations regarding ways in which improved quality and cost-effectiveness could be achieved through the selective expansion of effective programs and/or the curtailment of less effective programs; and (vii) an assessment of the availability and effectiveness of approved programs providing services to preschool children with autism.]~~

§ 2. This act shall take effect immediately.