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TRANSITIONAL KINDERGARTEN

Senate Bill 1381 (Simitian, Chapter 705, Statutes of 2010) changed the kindergarten entry-age in California from five years old by December 2nd to five years old by September 1st. The new age requirement will be phased-in over three years beginning in the 2012-13 school year. Those “young fives” (children turning five from September 2 – December 2) whose kindergarten is delayed by the new cut-off date, will be served in a transitional kindergarten program, at no additional cost to the state, using a curriculum that is age and developmentally appropriate.

The Governor’s 2012-13 Proposed Budget calls for the elimination of funding for transitional kindergarten in order to save \$223 million for the state. Below are some of the potential negative impacts of changing the kindergarten cut-off date without providing transitional kindergarten:

- Approximately 125,000 children (born between Sep. 2nd – Dec. 2nd) would be displaced from the K-12 school system;
 - 60 percent of these students attend Title 1 schools and 40 percent are English Learners
 - this would be the largest displacement of children from public schools in our nation’s history

- Permanent reduction to Proposition 98 guarantee
 - since ADA is a multiplier in the Prop 98 formula, displacing 125,000 children from kindergarten, and subsequent grade levels for the following 12 years, would result in a lower guarantee in the future when the leading small cohort(s) have graduated and statewide ADA returns to what it otherwise would have been

- Loss of funding for special education (approx. \$100 million)
 - districts are responsible for providing special education services to children once they turn 3 years old, however, these children don't generate funding for schools until they enroll in kindergarten
 - districts would lose \$75.6 million in AB 602 special education funding (assume \$600 per student as the statewide average)
 - districts would also lose \$30.4 million in revenue limit funding that supports affected special education students born in the fall (assume \$5,000 per student as the deficated statewide average revenue limit for a unified school district)

- Budget cuts to local school districts (displacing the fall cohort would save money for the State, but not necessarily for districts);
 - losing $\frac{1}{4}$ of the funding for the kindergarten cohort doesn't translate directly into savings for school districts; depending on the size of the district and distribution of the local population, "savings" or at least cost avoidance would vary significantly
 - smaller school districts would lose ADA funding, but may not be able to eliminate classes or lay-off teachers
 - losing enrollment on the margins results in 100 percent loss of the associated ADA funding, but fixed costs remain

- More teacher lay-offs in a bad economy and in the midst of billions in cuts to K-12 education;
 - 4,500 teacher jobs would be eliminated (assuming all districts could eliminate classes with 25-30 students per class), these teacher lay-offs would be repeated annually at each subsequent grade level for 13 years

- Negative financial impact on families that would be required to pay for an additional year of childcare/preschool or loss of income from a care-giver out of the work force for an additional year;
 - this would be an especially hard impact on working families that cannot afford preschool (State preschool program isn't an option since there are currently 83,000 children on the wait-list)
 - the lack of access to preschool is further compounded by the fact that the Governor's proposed budget calls for the elimination of 71,000 child care slots
 - \$6,000 (part-day) to \$15,000 (full-day) average cost of a year of preschool (depending on location and the quality of the program)