

Date of Hearing: May 6, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 1631 (Muratsuchi) – As Amended March 23, 2026

Policy Committee: Education

Vote: 6 - 2

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: Yes

Reimbursable: Yes

**SUMMARY:**

This bill requires, beginning with the 2028-29 school year, a child enrolling in first grade in public school to have already completed one year of kindergarten, thereby making kindergarten mandatory for all California children.

Specifically, this bill implements mandatory kindergarten on a four-year schedule, with all children who have their sixth birthday on or before September 1, 2031, required to have completed one year of kindergarten before enrolling in first grade for the 2031-32 school year.

**FISCAL EFFECT:**

- 1) Unknown Proposition 98 General Fund costs, beginning in the 2028-29 fiscal year, for increased per-student funding to attend kindergarten, likely in the tens of millions of dollars annually, and increasing from fiscal year 2028-29 until full implementation in the 2031-32 fiscal year, with full implementation costs likely exceeding \$175 million annually due to average daily attendance (ADA) increases associated with more kindergarten students in public schools than under current law.

Based on enrollment data from the CDE, it is likely that approximately 4% of students enrolling in first grade in a given year did not attend kindergarten, which equals approximately 14,000 students. If every one of the 14,000 students born between July 1 and September 1, 2028, enrolled in public kindergarten as a result of this bill, and were funded at 2025-26 rates, costs in the initial year of implementation would be about \$15 million.

This estimate does not contemplate additional funding increases, likely in the tens of millions of dollars annually, associated with increased allocations under the Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELOP) and Special Education AB 602 funding formulas, both of which are primarily determined based on ADA counts.

In addition, LEAs may experience other increases in local costs, likely millions to tens of millions of dollars, cumulatively statewide, associated with increased facility and staffing costs to accommodate additional students enrolled in kindergarten.

- 2) Ongoing General Fund costs to the California Department of Education (CDE), likely in the hundreds of thousands of dollars annually, to provide administrative duties associated with requiring kindergarten enrollment, such as providing technical assistance and training as well as incorporating technical changes to apportionment software. This bill's phased-in

implementation makes it more complex than previous iterations of mandatory kindergarten policies, and, therefore, LEAs would likely require additional technical assistance from the CDE to implement.

If the Commission on State Mandates determines the bill's requirements to be a reimbursable state mandate, the state would need to reimburse these costs to local education agencies or provide funding through the K-12 Mandate Block Grant.

#### COMMENTS:

1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

As expectations for first grade have increased, too many children are entering school without the foundational skills they need to succeed. This bill ensures that every child enters first grade having completed one year of kindergarten, while preserving parental choice by allowing families to meet this requirement through public school, private school, or homeschooling. By strengthening early learning, this measure helps close opportunity gaps and gives all children a fair start in their education.

1) **Background.** Compulsory education laws begin at age six in California, and parents are not required to enroll their children in kindergarten. However, school districts are required to offer kindergarten and state law considers kindergarten a grade for funding purposes. School districts receive a base amount of \$11,323 per kindergarten student as of the 2025-26 school year, with additional funding for students who come from low-income families, are English learners, or are foster youth. Current law allows school districts to offer either full-day or part-day kindergarten, with a statutory minimum day length of 180 minutes of instruction. A school district receives the same per-student funding amount regardless of the length of its kindergarten program.

In addition, in the 2025-26 school year the state entered the final year of implementation for universal transitional kindergarten (TK) for all California four-year olds. TK is not mandatory.

2) **Prior Legislation.** SB 1056 (Susan Rubio), of the 2023-24 Legislative Session, would have required, beginning in the 2026-27 school year, a child to complete one year of kindergarten before attending first grade. SB 1056 was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

AB 2226 (Muratsuchi), of the 2023-24 Legislative Session, would have required, beginning in the 2026-27 school year, a child to complete one year of kindergarten before attending first grade. AB 2226 was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

**Analysis Prepared by:** Aaron Heredia / APPR. / (916) 319-2081