



Date: May 6, 2009
To: Members of the Texas Legislature
From: Texas Public Policy Foundation
Subject: Urgent: House Bill 130 on pre-kindergarten

House Bill 130, which represents a massive expansion of pre-kindergarten programs statewide, is on the House calendar and could be debated later today. The new grant program for full-day pre-kindergarten created by this bill would cost taxpayers an additional \$390 million during the 2010-11 biennium, and almost \$1.3 billion over the next five years.

Besides the cost of the bill, we are concerned about the creation of an additional grant program besides the one already operated by the Texas Education Agency and the requirement that all pre-K providers use only teachers with a bachelor's degree (including nine semester hours of early childhood education) and a teacher certification. In addition, the private sector will not be a full partner in providing pre-K services since the bill only requires 20 percent of grant funds to be contracted to private sector providers. The bill does not contain accountability mechanisms for how the money is spent and for measuring academic results.

We also fear that the move from half-day to full-day is a step toward universal, government-funded pre-K.

Research does not show that full-day pre-K programs (such as that proposed in HB 130) are more effective than half-day programs, or that pre-K provides any lasting benefit to students – such as reduced dropout or crime rates.

But research *does* show that the quality of a teacher (which can be achieved through rigorous professional development in TEEM) is far more important than a certification. A bachelor's degree and a teacher certification does not necessarily make one an effective pre-K teacher, but it would sharply drive up the cost of pre-K.

Texas currently has a vibrant market of mom-and-pop pre-K operators, but this bill could drive many of them out of business.

In March, the Foundation and several other organizations sent a [letter](#) (attached) sharing our concerns about this bill with the members of the House and Senate education committees. We encourage House members to keep these concerns in mind when considering HB 130.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions, or would like further information on our research. You can reach education policy analyst Brooke Terry at 512-472-2700 (office) or bterry@texaspolicy.com.