



DOAA

Georgia Department
of Audits & Accounts

Greg S. Griffin
State Auditor

March 6, 2026

Honorable Chris Erwin
Chairman, House Education Committee
220-B State Capitol
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

SUBJECT: Fiscal Note
House Bill 1193 (LC 49 2653S)

Dear Chairman Erwin:

This bill would provide for mandatory kindergarten for all children prior to entering first grade (with exceptions), and encourage attendance in school (public, private, or home-based) beginning at age five. Current statute requires attendance from the student’s sixth birthday until their sixteenth birthday (or completion of high school diploma requirements). The bill also expands eligibility for the Georgia Pre-K Program to allow five-year olds to be enrolled (currently limited to four-year olds). Students newly entering first grade would be required to be assessed by school systems for their readiness of entering first grade.

This bill would also provide for additional literacy coaches, as well as the creation of new literacy-related endorsement programs and at least one professional learning program that emphasizes the science of reading. Finally, it would create a Georgia Literacy Coordinating Committee and a Georgia Literacy Task Force that would coordinate efforts of statewide literacy programs, develop a statewide literacy plan, and provide recommendations to various entities related to literacy.

Based on data provided by the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE), Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL), Governor’s Office of Student Achievement (GOSA), and Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC), the bill would result in an estimated \$212.2 million in annual costs and \$37.7 million in one-time costs (see **Table 1**). The cost categories are discussed in detail below.

Table 1: Summary of Costs of LC 49 2653S

	One-time Costs	Annual Costs
GaDOE	\$25,320,000	\$207,170,594
DECAL	\$12,000,000	\$4,500,000
GOSA ¹	\$380,000	\$37,000 ¹
GaPSC	<u>\$9,044</u>	<u>\$518,920</u>
Total	\$37,709,044	\$212,226,514

¹ Figures reported reflect the top end of the ranges provided by GOSA (one-time cost: \$370,000-\$380,000; annual cost \$96,000-\$110,000). Annual cost shown in the table (\$37,000) amounts to approximately \$110,000 every three years.

Kindergarten - Annual Costs

As shown in **Table 2**, the additional students attending public schools would increase annual QBE costs by an estimated \$48 million. Census data suggests that there were approximately 9,742 five-year-old children not enrolled in a public or private school or being home schooled in 2023. The estimate assumes that approximately 86% would enroll in a public school (the current enrollment percentage for these schools). The analysis also accounts for the difference in funding amounts for traditional kindergarten students versus those on Early Intervention Program (EIP) plans which are funded at a higher amount. The percentage of kindergarten students currently enrolled in EIP plans was applied to the new population that would be required to enter school. It should be noted that the percentage of EIP students has increased in recent years, and costs in future years would exceed the estimates presented in Table 1 if that trend continues. In addition, although the bill would recommend rather than require kindergarten enrollment at age five, the estimate assumes unenrolled five-year olds would begin attending kindergarten.

Table 2: Annual State Costs

Grade Level	Additional Students	Per FTE Amount	Total Estimated Cost
Kindergarten	7,052	\$5,489	\$38,708,428
Kindergarten EIP	<u>1,372</u>	\$6,806	<u>\$9,337,832</u>
Total	8,424		\$48,046,260

Note: Changes in QBE earnings are borne by the state and local school systems, with the ratio dependent on Local Five Mill Share calculations made each year. Currently, the state share is 80% but could increase in future years based on changes in local property tax digests.

Kindergarten- Capital Costs

An increase in students will also result in capital costs for additional classrooms. As shown in **Table 3**, assuming no current classroom space would be available to accommodate additional kindergarten students, additional classrooms of 20 students would cost a maximum of \$25.3 million and additional classrooms of 25 students would cost \$20.2 million. According to the Georgia Department of Education, the average state-funded capital reimbursement rate for a 750 square foot classroom was \$60,000 (or \$80/per square foot). This cost calculation includes enough classrooms for the populations discussed in Table 2.

Table 3: Capital Costs

Capital Costs Categories	Number of Students	Classes of 20	Classes of 25	Cost per Classroom	Total Cost for 20-student classes	Total Cost for 25-student classes
Kindergarten	7,053	353	282	\$60,000	\$21,180,000	\$16,920,000
Kindergarten EIP	<u>1,372</u>	<u>69</u>	<u>55</u>	\$60,000	<u>\$4,140,000</u>	<u>\$3,300,000</u>
Total	8,424	422	337		\$25,320,000	\$20,220,000

Current state law caps kindergarten class sizes at 18 (or 20 with a full-time paraprofessional in the classroom). If class size caps were increased to 25 students per classroom, the state would save approximately \$5.1 million in initial capital costs. Annual costs for QBE per student allotments would remain the same. Additionally, DOE reports actual cost for elementary school classrooms at \$239/per square foot. Any costs above the \$80/per square foot state-funded reimbursement rate that districts require to accommodate additional kindergarten classrooms would vary based on local discretion and require local funds.

Literacy Coaches

As shown in **Table 4**, funding literacy positions would increase costs by an estimated \$158.8 million annually. Data provided by GaDOE for fiscal year 2025 indicated that literacy coaches in each school with grades K-3 would increase annual QBE costs by an estimated \$156.1 million. The estimate assumes that larger K-3 schools (over 200 FTEs) would need a full-time literacy coach and smaller schools (under 200 FTEs) would have a half-time literacy coach. The estimate assumes all schools would hire literacy coaches and that the average salary and fringe with 15 years of experience would be \$150,000 for larger schools and \$75,000 for smaller schools. The state would incur an additional \$2.8 million to hire one Regional Leadership Literacy Coach in each of the state’s 16 Regional Education Service Agencies. No additional cost would be incurred for RESA-based literacy coaches because these positions already exist.

Table 4: Annual Literacy Coach Costs

Category	Number of Schools/RESAs	Cost per Position	Total Estimated Cost
School-Based Positions			
K-3 schools (Over 200 FTEs)	1,285	\$150,000 (100%)	\$192,750,000
K-3 schools (Under 200 FTEs)	31	\$75,000 (50%)	<u>\$2,325,000</u>
Total Cost for Literacy Coaches			\$195,075,000
Less Local Share (Based on 80/20 Split)¹			<u>(\$39,015,000)</u>
Literacy Coaches State Cost			\$156,060,000
RESA-Based Positions			
Regional Leadership Literacy Coaches	16	\$172,500	\$2,760,000
Literacy Coaches	0	0	<u>0</u>
			\$2,760,000
Total			\$158,820,000

¹ Changes in QBE earnings are borne by the state and local school systems, with the ratio dependent on Local Five Mill Share calculations made each year. Currently, the state share is 80% but could increase in future years based on changes in local property tax digests.

Additional School-Based Costs

Based on data provided by GaDOE, it would need an additional \$304,334 annually to fund positions to develop guidelines for assessments, screeners, and other tools used to assess first grade readiness, and to develop intervention plans for at risk students to help them attain grade level proficiency. GaDOE acknowledged that additional requirements of the bill—assess first grade readiness with assessments, screeners or other tools; develop an annual report; review and approve instructional materials—are already covered under existing contracts. In addition, GaDOE has confirmed availability of grant funds to that will support specified statewide training costs.

It should be noted that GaDOE also expects there to be an increase in the number of students retained in kindergarten and first grade due to students not meeting readiness requirements, which would increase QBE costs. Costs would vary each year according to the rate of retention but could be significant.

Other Agency Costs

- Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)** – According to DECAL, training Pre-K teachers on new literacy standards as recommended by the State Board of Education and GOSA in the bill is expected to cost an estimated \$12 million in initial costs for the first year and \$4.5 million in each year thereafter. Initial costs are based on 4,000 lead Pre-K teachers receiving training at a cost of \$2,840 per teacher, as well as 3,200 Pre-K project and site directors receiving training at \$200 per administrator. As shown in **Table 5**, ongoing costs are based on a turnover rate of 20% for lead Pre-K teachers, a trainer refresher course offered to returning lead Pre-K teachers, training new project and site directors, new classes funded annually, and costs to provide supplemental or replacement instructional materials.

Table 5: DECAL Ongoing Costs for Georgia’s Pre-K Program

Costs Categories	Number	One-Time Costs	Total Annual Costs
Current Pre-K Teachers and Directors Training	7,200	\$12,000,000	
New Teacher Trainings (assuming 20% turnover per year)	800		\$1,856,000
Refresher Teacher Trainings	3,200		\$960,000
New Project & Site Directors Training	1,000		\$200,000
Training and Instructional Materials for New Classes	100		\$284,000
Supplemental and Replacement Instructional Materials	4,000		<u>\$1,200,000</u>
Total		\$12,000,000	\$4,500,000

Allowing five-year olds to enroll in Georgia’s Pre-K program is not expected to incur any additional costs because of existing slot caps. If slots were expanded to allow for more Pre-K enrollment, each additional slot would be an extra \$6,884 per year.

- Governor’s Office of Student Achievement (GOSA)** – To develop professional learning programs and recommend universal reading screeners and instructional materials, costs would increase between \$96,000 and \$110,000 per universal screener being developed, as well as result in one-time costs of between \$370,000 and \$380,000 to review and make recommendations for developing a new professional learning program on literacy instruction for teachers. This estimate is based on contracting with five external subject-matter experts to evaluate between 10 and 16 newly required screeners for an ongoing cost (every three years) between \$96,000 and \$110,000. It also includes between \$370,000 and \$380,000 in one-time costs for at least one (as specified in the bill) professional learning program based on the development and publication of new materials and resources aligned with the science of reading.
- Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC)** – To conduct reviews of each state-approved educator preparation program to ensure compliance with new literacy requirements every four years, this bill would increase costs by an estimated \$518,920 annually, with one-time costs of \$9,044. This estimate includes \$504,154 for four new positions costing \$126,038 each for the Georgia Professional Standards Commission to assist with reviewing 951 educator preparation programs, where the maximum number of reviews per staff member is around six per year. Because the current requirement is to

review educator preparation programs every seven years, staff workload would likely double. The estimate also includes \$14,768 in operating expenses.

Respectfully,



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Richard Dunn, Director
Office of Planning and Budget

GSG/RD/jw