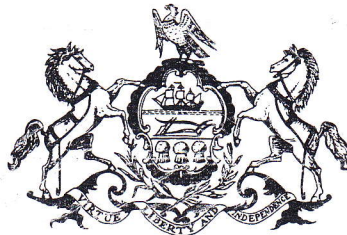


PATRICK J. HARKINS, MEMBER  
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**House of Representatives**  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
HARRISBURG

COMMITTEES

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**Memorandum**

**TO:** All Members of the House of Representatives  
**FROM:** Representative Patrick Harkins *P.J.H.*  
**DATE:** May 29, 2012  
**SUBJECT:** Co-sponsorship of Legislation – Requiring School Districts to Offer Kindergarten.

In the near future, I will be introducing legislation that will amend the Public School Code of 1949 (P.L. 30 No. 14) to require school districts to offer kindergarten to students who reside within their districts, as well as changing the minimum compulsory attendance age from eight to six. My bill would also provide for annual funding for this important program.

Research is clear: effective early learning programs are crucial to a child's development and educational achievement later in life. As you may know, Pennsylvania is one of a handful of states that does not require students to attend, or require school districts to offer, kindergarten – whether it be half-day kindergarten or full-day kindergarten. In addition, the Commonwealth and Washington State have the highest minimum compulsory attendance ages in the nation at eight years of age.

Unfortunately, in an age of decreased appropriations for crucial line-items such as the Accountability Block Grants, school districts across the state are contemplating completely eliminating their current kindergarten programs. In response to this, my legislation will amend Section 503 of the Public School Code to require all school districts to establish and maintain at least part-time kindergarten programs for the full academic year. School districts may establish age policies but may not deny kindergarten to any child who is five years of age or older on the first day of the school year. Furthermore, my bill will amend Section 1326 of the Public School Code, specifically the definition of "compulsory school age," to change the minimum required age of attendance from eight to six.

Finally, my legislation establishes a constant stream of funding each year for schools to offer kindergarten by requiring \$100 million of sales tax revenue to be annually deposited in a special fund within the Treasury Department for the purposes of providing grants to school districts. The amount provided to school districts under my legislation shall be in addition to any other amount otherwise appropriated for kindergarten and early childhood education programs, such as the Accountability Block Grants.

No child should be denied kindergarten simply because the district they reside in is experiencing financial difficulties. If you would like to co-sponsor this legislation, please contact Terra Heilman in my Harrisburg office via email [theilman@pahouse.net](mailto:theilman@pahouse.net).

JUN 01 2012