

SB3294



101ST GENERAL ASSEMBLY

State of Illinois

2019 and 2020

SB3294

Introduced 2/11/2020, by Sen. Ram Villivalam

SYNOPSIS AS INTRODUCED:

225 ILCS 10/7.11 new

Amends the Child Care Act of 1969. Provides that the Department of Children and Family Services shall create a 4-year outdoor preschool pilot program. Provides that 10 pilot locations shall be selected for the first year of the pilot program, with additional locations able to apply after the first year. Requires the Department to convene an advisory group to inform and support the implementation of the pilot program. Requires the Department to provide the General Assembly and Governor with reports on the participation of providers and children in the program and recommendations on modifying or expanding the availability of outdoor preschools. Repeals the provisions on January 1, 2026. Effective immediately.

LRB101 20256 SPS 69796 b

FISCAL NOTE ACT
MAY APPLY

A BILL FOR

1 AN ACT concerning regulation.

2 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,**
3 **represented in the General Assembly:**

4 Section 5. The Child Care Act of 1969 is amended by adding
5 Section 7.11 as follows:

6 (225 ILCS 10/7.11 new)

7 Sec. 7.11. Outdoor preschool pilot program.

8 (a) The General Assembly finds that outdoor, nature-based
9 early learning and child care programs are in high demand but
10 are unlicensed under existing law and thus unable to offer
11 full-day programs, which many working families are seeking. The
12 General Assembly further finds that the outdoor preschool model
13 could help expand the number of high quality early learning
14 opportunities available to families throughout the State,
15 particularly in areas where preschool-appropriate indoor space
16 is unavailable or unaffordable. Additionally, when early
17 learning programs spend less on their physical facilities, they
18 are able to spend more on recruiting and retaining teachers and
19 other early learning professionals. The General Assembly also
20 finds that research on outdoor preschools operating in
21 Scandinavian countries for decades has demonstrated a positive
22 impact on children's development, including improved cognitive
23 and social skills when children transition to grade school. The

1 General Assembly, therefore, intends to establish a pilot
2 program to license outdoor preschools in order to expand access
3 to affordable, high quality early learning programs and to
4 further investigate the benefits of outdoor, nature-based
5 classrooms for Illinois children and families.

6 (b) For purposes of this Section, "outdoor, nature-based
7 early learning and child care program" means an agency-offered
8 program operated primarily outdoors in which children are
9 enrolled on a regular basis for 3 or more hours per day.

10 (c) The Department shall establish a pilot program to
11 license outdoor, nature-based early learning and child care
12 programs. The pilot program shall commence August 31, 2020 and
13 conclude June 30, 2024.

14 (d) The Department shall adopt rules to implement the pilot
15 program and may waive or adapt licensing requirements when
16 necessary to allow for the operation of outdoor classrooms.

17 (e) As part of the pilot program, the Department shall
18 explore options for developing a quality rating and improvement
19 system for outdoor preschools. The Department may receive and
20 expend funds from philanthropic organizations in order to
21 implement this Section. The Department shall include a
22 discussion of options and recommendations in the final report
23 required under this Section.

24 (f) The Department shall select up to 10 pilot locations
25 during the first year of the pilot program. Beginning August
26 31, 2021, additional outdoor, nature-based early learning and

1 child care programs may apply to participate in the pilot
2 program. When selecting and approving pilot program locations,
3 the Department shall aim to select a mix of rural, urban, and
4 suburban locations and may give priority to:

5 (1) areas where there are few or limited licensed early
6 learning programs;

7 (2) areas of need where licensed early learning
8 programs are at or near full capacity and where access may
9 be restricted by one or more enrollment waiting lists; and

10 (3) areas where an outdoor early learning program would
11 provide more family choice.

12 (g) The Department shall convene an advisory group of
13 outdoor, nature-based early learning practitioners to inform
14 and support implementation of the pilot program.

15 (h) The Department shall provide the following reports to
16 the General Assembly and the Governor:

17 (1) by January 15, 2021, and annually thereafter
18 through January 15, 2024, a brief status report describing
19 implementation of the pilot program, including a
20 description of participating providers and the number of
21 children and families being served;

22 (2) by November 30, 2024, a full report on findings
23 from the pilot program, including recommendations for
24 modifying or expanding the availability of outdoor,
25 nature-based early learning and child care programs; the
26 final report also must include a discussion of potential

1 options to mitigate the uncertainty for families and
2 participating providers during the final 6 months of the
3 pilot program when legislation may be pending.

4 (i) The provisions of this Section are subject to
5 appropriation.

6 (j) This Section is repealed on January 1, 2026.

7 Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon
8 becoming law.