



ANDY BESHEAR
GOVERNOR

EXECUTIVE ORDER

Secretary of State
Frankfort
Kentucky

2026-253
May 7, 2026

In Kentucky, we are reigniting the American Dream. Our people deserve the opportunity to find a great job, to afford a home of their own, and to be able to provide for a healthy family right here in the Commonwealth.

That Dream begins in our classrooms, where we strive to ensure all of our children can reach their full potential.

And the greatest opportunity we have to make a positive impact is with our youngest learners.

Unfortunately, because of strict eligibility criteria and lack of funding by the Kentucky General Assembly, only 1 out of every 4 of Kentucky's 54,000 4-year-olds has the opportunity to attend preschool. This is unacceptable.

Private childcare is extremely limited or does not exist in many parts of Kentucky, especially our rural counties in eastern and western Kentucky.

Where private childcare does exist, it is prohibitively expensive for Kentucky families, often requiring them to pay hundreds or thousands of dollars just to sit on a waiting list.

The results are heartbreaking: half of Kentucky children – approximately 54% – arrive on their first day of school not kindergarten ready, and 79 of Kentucky's 120 counties are considered "child care deserts," most of which are located in rural Kentucky.

That's why on June 4, 2025 I issued Executive Order 2025-351, creating the Team Kentucky Pre-K for All Advisory Committee, which was comprised of leaders in education, child care, workforce development, government, and business. The purpose of the Committee was to study existing models of successful state-funded pre-kindergarten programs to make recommendations to the Executive Branch and the General Assembly on best practices to effectively implement a voluntary Pre-K program in Kentucky.

The Committee hosted five town halls across the Commonwealth and regularly met to hear from subject matter experts about Pre-K programs across the country. The culmination of their work came in October 2025 when the Committee issued a comprehensive report containing its findings and recommendations.

The recommendations included expanding Kentucky's existing, state-funded preschool program in a phased and responsible way over several years.

Building off these recommendations, I proposed an Executive Branch budget containing \$40 million to expand preschool access to an additional 9,600 Kentucky children. Legislators filed other bills in the Kentucky Senate and House of Representatives during the legislature's 2026 Regular Session that would have expanded access to Pre-K for Kentucky's children – with bipartisan support.

In short, this Administration did all of the legislature's homework for it, and all the General Assembly had to do was pass a bill.



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The legislature failed to do its job for Kentucky families.

But this Administration will not.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Andy Beshear, Governor of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Kentucky Constitution and KRS 12.029, do hereby Declare, Order and Direct the following:

- I. The Team Kentucky Pre-K for All Pilot Program is hereby created and housed in the Education and Labor Cabinet.
- II. The Secretary of the Education and Labor Cabinet is hereby directed to enter into interagency agreements with local school districts that shall require the selected school districts to provide full day universal pre-K for all 4-year-olds in the school district.
- III. The number of school districts selected for the Team Kentucky Pre-K for All Pilot Program shall be based on the availability of funds.
- IV. Each local district selected to participate in the Team Kentucky Pre-K for All Pilot Program shall be subject to reporting requirements established by the Secretary of the Education and Labor Cabinet.
- V. The Education and Labor Cabinet, the Cabinet for Health and Family Services, the Cabinet for Economic Development, the Public Protection Cabinet, and the Office of the Governor shall provide any resources, material, and staffing support necessary to implement the Team Kentucky Pre-K for All Pilot Program.

This Order shall be effective May 7, 2026.


ANDY BESHEAR, Governor
Commonwealth of Kentucky

MICHAEL G. ADAMS
Secretary of State