

SUBCOMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

Item 8: Department of Education Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education

To: Ways and Means Full Committee
From: Education Subcommittee
Carrier: Senator Frederick

The Education Subcommittee recommends that the Joint Interim Committee on Ways and Means recommend including an increase of \$22.1 million in the Other Funds expenditure limitation for the Department of Education in a budget reconciliation bill during the 2024 legislative session to address caseload growth in the Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education program.

The Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education program serves children with disabilities and their families to improve developmental status and increase school readiness for each child. Children are typically recommended for program screening by families, pediatricians, or early childhood educators at the point where they either are first seen for medical care or are first introduced to a child care setting. During the COVID-19 pandemic, caseload dropped significantly, but post-pandemic, caseloads have rebounded and now appear to be on a trajectory to exceed pre-pandemic levels this biennium.

Current funding for the program in the 2023-25 biennium is \$336 million total funds, a level that will not cover the program's estimated 2023-25 caseload at the current rate of growth. The Department estimates that an additional \$22.1 million would accommodate a caseload increase of 5% per year in the current biennium.

The Education Subcommittee recommends approval.