



February 5, 2026

Via Electronic Mail

Kentucky General Assembly
702 Capital Avenue
Annex
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601

Re: Kentucky Superintendents Supporting Pre-K for All

Dear Senators and Representatives,

As a majority of the superintendents in the Commonwealth of Kentucky, we write urging you to support the Pre-K for All initiative. It would expand Kentucky's voluntary publicly-funded preschool program, so that every Kentucky four-year-old has an opportunity at a strong start.

Our children are facing educational challenges. Fewer than half of Kentucky's kids come to kindergarten ready. We see this in our own classrooms. Children who start behind often stay behind, and it becomes harder and more expensive to help them catch up later. We know expanded Pre-K can change that trajectory. Pre-K for All would make sure every four-year-old in our Commonwealth has the foundation they need to thrive.

At the same time, we know families are struggling to pay the bills and lack of childcare is a key driver. Pre-K for All can help ease the financial burden and boost household earnings by nearly \$9,000 dollars each year for at least six years. That's \$54,000 more dollars in the pockets of our families, cycling through our local economies, creating and maintaining jobs, and growing our communities.

We are in classrooms every day, so we know – **Pre-K works.** But right now, only 14,000 of Kentucky's 54,000 four-year-olds have access to it.

We know from lived experience what numerous studies show - Pre-K improves kindergarten readiness, boosts high school graduation rates, and even raises lifetime earnings after students leave our schools. Families save thousands of dollars, and it fuels workforce participation - raising household incomes and providing more learning opportunities for kids.

Consider the data:

- **Improves Kindergarten Readiness:** Over half – 53.8% – of Kentucky's children arrive at kindergarten already behind. Pre-K for All would close this gap and make sure every Kentucky child has a strong start.
- **Expands the Workforce:** Up to 70,000 Kentuckians are unable to work because they lack childcare. Pre-K for All will let parents reenter the

Kentucky Superintendents Supporting Expanding Pre-School Access

February 5, 2026

Page 2

workforce and take advantage of local job opportunities in our cities and towns across Kentucky.

- **Raises Household Incomes:** A long-term study shows that families with access to Pre-K earn nearly **\$9,000 more per year** - gains that persist for years after their child completes Pre-K.
- **Delivers a 10:1 Return on Investment:** Every dollar invested in Pre-K yields ten dollars in return—from better jobs and health outcomes to reduced criminal justice costs and increased educational attainment.
- **Creates Jobs in Education:** Pre-K for All will generate demand for educators and support staff across the state, creating new careers, and helping attract talent to our towns and cities.
- **Expands Access Across Kentucky:** With 79 of Kentucky's 120 counties having little to no childcare available, this initiative will expand access, create job opportunities, give parents a choice, and lay the foundation for academic success.

As educational leaders, we can say with complete confidence Pre-K for All would be transformative, for our students, our schools, and our Commonwealth. It would help close readiness gaps before they begin, reduce the burden on K-12 intervention services, and build a stronger foundation for every learner across Kentucky.

Our students and their families cannot wait. We urge the General Assembly to make expanding Pre-K access for all Kentucky four-year-olds a top priority in the 2026 Budget Session. Together we can give every Kentucky child a great start, support working families, and invest in a stronger, more competitive Kentucky.

Thank you for your commitment to Kentucky's students and families and for your consideration of this vital initiative.

Respectfully,

The Undersigned Superintendents of the Commonwealth of Kentucky

Kentucky Superintendents Supporting Expanding Pre-School Access

February 5, 2026

Page 3

Travis Hamby

Superintendent Travis Hamby
Allen County Public Schools

Sharla Six

Superintendent Sharla Six
Anchorage Independent Schools

Sheila Mitchell

Superintendent Sheila Mitchell
Anderson County Public Schools

Lisa McCane

Superintendent Lisa McCane
Augusta Independent Schools

Casey Allen

Superintendent Casey Allen
Ballard County Public Schools

Ryan Clark

Superintendent Ryan Clark
Bardstown Independent Schools

Brian Crawford

Superintendent Brian Crawford
Bell County Public Schools

Ryan Neaves

Superintendent Ryan Neaves
Berea Independent Schools

Larry Begley

Superintendent Larry Begley
Bourbon County Public Schools

William Boblett

Superintendent William Boblett
Boyd County Public Schools

Mark Wade

Superintendent Mark Wade
Boyle County Public Schools

Clay King

Superintendent Clay King
Bracken County Public Schools

Phillip Watts

Superintendent Phillip Watts
Breathitt County Public Schools

Nick Carter

Superintendent Nick Carter
Breckinridge County Public Schools

Jesse Bacon

Superintendent Jesse Bacon
Bullitt County Public Schools

Robert Tuck

Superintendent Robert Tuck
Butler County Public Schools

Kentucky Superintendents Supporting Expanding Pre-School Access

February 5, 2026

Page 4

Tom Radivonyk

Superintendent Tom Radivonyk
Carlisle County Public Schools

Amanda Abell

Superintendent Amanda Abell
Caverna Independent Schools

Dustin Howard

Superintendent Dustin Howard
Clark County Public Schools

Alvin Garrison

Superintendent Alvin Garrison
Covington Independent Schools

Leonard Whalen

Superintendent Leonard Whalen
Dawson Springs Independent Schools

Brian Alexander

Superintendent Brian Alexander
Edmonson County Public Schools

Buddy Berry

Superintendent Buddy Berry
Eminence Independent Schools

Tonya Williams

Superintendent Tonya Williams
Floyd County Public Schools

Mark Kopp

Superintendent Mark Kopp
Franklin County Public Schools

Casey Jaynes

Superintendent Casey Jaynes
Carroll County Public Schools

Christopher Bentzel

Superintendent Christopher Bentzel
Christian County Public Schools

Travis Wilder

Superintendent Travis Wilder
Corbin Independent Schools

Kirk Biggerstaff

Superintendent Kirk Biggerstaff
Cumberland County Public Schools

Rick Wolf

Superintendent Rick Wolf
Dayton Independent Schools

Dolly Fannin

Superintendent Dolly Fannin
Elliott County Public Schools

Demetrus Liggins

Superintendent Demetrus Liggins
Fayette County Public Schools

Sheri Satterly

Superintendent Sheri Satterly
Frankfort Independent Schools

Ellen Murphy

Superintendent Ellen Murphy
Fulton County Public Schools

Kentucky Superintendents Supporting Expanding Pre-School Access

February 5, 2026

Page 5

Terry Sullivan

Superintendent Terry Sullivan
Fulton Independent Schools

Todd Moody

Superintendent Todd Moody
Grant County Public Schools

Steve Hall

Superintendent Steve Hall
Greenup County Public Schools

Brett Johnson

Superintendent Brett Johnson
Harlan County Public Schools

Sondra Combs

Superintendent Sondra Combs
Hazard Independent Schools

Jim Masters

Superintendent Jim Masters
Henry County Public Schools

Wayne Sizemore

Superintendent Wayne Sizemore
Jackson Independent Schools

Damian Johnson

Superintendent Damian Johnson
Jenkins Independent Schools

Adryanne Warren

Superintendent Adryanne Warren
LaRue County Public Schools

Kevin Stull

Superintendent Kevin Stull
Garrard County Public Schools

Matthew Madding

Superintendent Matthew Madding
Graves County Public Schools

Teresa Morgan

Superintendent Teresa Morgan
Hardin County Public Schools

Jennifer Parsons

Superintendent Jennifer Parsons
Harlan Independent Schools

Bob Lawson

Superintendent Bob Lawson
Henderson County Public Schools

Renee Smith

Superintendent Renee Smith
Jackson County Public Schools

Brian Yearwood

Superintendent Brian Yearwood
Jefferson County Public Schools

Gregory Conn

Superintendent Gregory Conn
Knott County Public Schools

Denise Griebel

Superintendent Denise Griebel
Laurel County Public Schools

Kentucky Superintendents Supporting Expanding Pre-School Access

February 5, 2026

Page 6

Brett Wilson

Superintendent Brett Wilson
Leslie County Public Schools

Dan Costellow

Superintendent Dan Costellow
Logan County Public Schools

Chris Meadows

Superintendent Chris Meadows
Magoffin County Public Schools

Larry James

Superintendent Larry James
Martin County Public Schools

Joshua Kincaid

Superintendent Joshua Kincaid
Menifee County Public Schools

Contessa Orr

Superintendent Contessa Orr
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Matt Atkins

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Newport Independent Schools

Claudette Herald

Superintendent Claudette Herald
Oldham County Public Schools

Gary Cornett

Superintendent Gary Cornett
Owsley County Public Schools

Denise Yonts

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Letcher County Public Schools

Jason Steffen

Superintendent Jason Steffen
Ludlow Independent Schools

Bill Thorpe

Superintendent Bill Thorpe
Marshall County Public Schools

Tommy Burrough

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McLean County Public Schools

Amy Thompson

Superintendent Amy Thompson
Monroe County Public Schools

Wes Bradley

Superintendent Wes Bradley
Nelson County Public Schools

Doug Bechanan

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Nicholas County Public Schools

Wendy Duvall

Superintendent Wendy Duvall
Owensboro Independent Schools

Donald Shively

Superintendent Donald Shively
Paducah Independent Schools

Kentucky Superintendents Supporting Expanding Pre-School Access

February 5, 2026

Page 7

Stephen McCauley

Superintendent Stephen McCauley
Paris Independent Schools

Freddie Bowling

Superintendent Freddie Bowling
Pike County Public Schools

Sarah Wasson

Superintendent Sarah Wasson
Powell County Public Schools

Larry Coldiron

Superintendent Larry Coldiron
Raceland-Worthington Independent Schools

Carrie Ballinger

Superintendent Carrie Ballinger
Rockcastle County Public Schools

Michael Ford

Superintendent Michael Ford
Russell County Public Schools

Billy Parker

Superintendent Billy Parker
Scott County Public Schools

Terra Hancock

Superintendent Terra Hancock
Union County Public Schools

Rob Clayton

Superintendent Rob Clayton
Warren County Public Schools

Kent Campbell

Superintendent Kent Campbell
Perry County Public Schools

Russell Thompson

Superintendent Russell Thompson
Pineville Independent Schools

Patrick Richardson

Superintendent Patrick Richardson
Pulaski County Public Schools

Sanford Holbrook

Superintendent Sanford Holbrook
Robertson County Public Schools

Michael Rowe

Superintendent Michael Rowe
Rowan County Public Schools

Sean Horne

Superintendent Sean Horne
Russell Independent Schools

William Foster

Superintendent William Foster
Spencer County Public Schools

Matthew Baker

Superintendent Matthew Baker
Walton-Verona Independent Schools

Robin Cochran

Superintendent Robin Cochran
Washington County Public Schools

Kentucky Superintendents Supporting Expanding Pre-School Access

February 5, 2026

Page 8

John Siler

Superintendent John Siler
Whitley County Public Schools

John Slone

Superintendent John Slone
Williamstown Independent Schools

Kenny Bell

Superintendent Kenny Bell
Wolfe County Public Schools

Lori Jones

Superintendent Lori Jones
Woodford County Public Schools

Attachments: Letter from Bath County Public Schools Superintendent Michael Melton
 Letter from Caverna Independent Schools Superintendent Amanda Abell



BATHCOUNTYSCHOOLS

February 3rd, 2026

Dear Members of the Kentucky General Assembly,

As Superintendent of the Bath County Schools I am in support of Pre-K for all from an educational, philosophical, and theoretical stance. The research data supports without question the importance and the impact that Pre-K has on a student's kindergarten readiness. The Commonwealth has offered publicly funded preschool for more than 30 years, currently serving qualifying students with disabilities and those who qualify economically. This roughly is estimated at about 14,500 students of our 54,000 four-year olds in the state or roughly 27% of four-year olds. So, as I mentioned previously I am in support of the Pre-K initiative from the educational, philosophical, and theoretical stances.

After many discussions with other superintendents and school leadership in districts of my comparable size, we are of the mind that we support Universal Pre-K but there will have to be major issues addressed in order for districts to implement. These are the non-negotiables:

- *Facility Needs:* There will have to be adequate funding to address the facility space challenges. As it stands now, our district does not have the space to accommodate the increase in student population to serve and educate that increased number of students. There would have to be increased support for innovative public-private partnerships but also to be aware that in districts in rural areas there may be limited private partners.
- *Workforce Capacity:* There will have to be a pool of qualified early childhood educators and support staff to fill the needs and we will have to have adequate funding for salaries and benefits to effectively compensate these professionals.
- *Operations and Long-Term Sustainability:* There will have to be long-term guaranteed funding streams to sustain expanded preschool programs, maintaining facilities, expanding facilities, and services. There will also have to be additional funding for transportation because additional bus drivers, vehicles, and monitors will have to be employed in order to maximize safety and be compliant legally.
- *Phasing:* Pre-K for all will have to be a phased approach with a tremendous amount of support and guidance to strategically make it an effective program addition rather than a cumbersome mandate.

We all agree that we need to do what is best for our students and their families and universal Pre-K is important for the future success of our students and the Commonwealth. With that acknowledgement, it will have to be fully funded for facility expansion, facility maintenance, availability of qualified teachers and staff, the funding of additional personnel to provide the support services, and be strategically, phased in over a period of years allowing districts time to implement. That means revenue streams will have to be available to many districts years in advance of the first universal Pre-K students coming into buildings.



BATHCOUNTYSCHOOLS

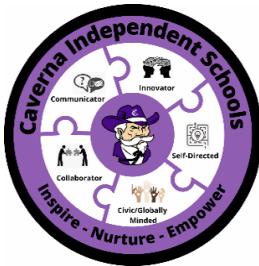
The Bath County Schools are willing to partner with the Governor's Office, the Legislature, and the Kentucky Department of Education to implement preschool expansion if the plan is funded and reasonable.

Thank you for your continued emphasis and commitment to the students and families of Kentucky.

Respectfully,

Dr. Michael C. Melton
Superintendent

michael.melton@bath.kyschools.us
606-216-1893 Cell



Caverna Independent School District

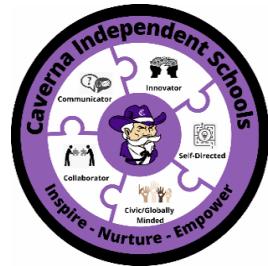
1102 North Dixie Hwy.

Cave City, Kentucky 42127

Phone (270) 773-2530

Fax (270)773-2524

Amanda G. Abell, Ed.S. - Superintendent



Dear Senators and Representatives,

I am writing to express strong support for the Preschool for All initiative and to urge your consideration of its long-term benefits for Kentucky's students, families, and communities.

Expanding access to preschool has been a long-standing priority of Kentucky superintendents across decades and administrations. This support reflects a shared, nonpartisan commitment to improving educational outcomes and promoting the wellbeing of Kentucky's children.

School readiness is foundational to success. When students begin kindergarten prepared, confident, and ready to learn, they are far more likely to thrive throughout their K–12 experience and beyond. High-quality, voluntary preschool opportunities strengthen early learning, improve long-term outcomes, and serve as a powerful tool for raising student achievement statewide.

We support expanding voluntary preschool access for four-year-olds through a responsible, phased-in approach. This allows districts to build capacity deliberately while maintaining quality and fiscal responsibility.

Local flexibility is essential. Kentucky's diverse communities require solutions that reflect local needs, including public-private partnerships and community-based approaches that leverage existing resources.

For successful implementation, legislation must address three key factors: adequate facility space, a strong early childhood workforce, and sustainable, long-term operational funding.

Support for preschool expansion does not replace other core education priorities, including modernizing the accountability system, strengthening the educator workforce pipeline, and securing budget policies that invest in long-term student and workforce success. Rather, early learning complements and strengthens these efforts.

Ultimately, this initiative is about what is best for Kentucky — providing opportunity early, supporting families, and preparing a stronger, more competitive workforce for the future. I respectfully urge your support for the Preschool for All initiative.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to public education.

Sincerely,

Amanda Abell
Superintendent
Caverna Independent School District