

Bill seeks one-year delay of all-day kindergarten

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The chairman of the Senate Education Committee is pushing to delay Gov. Ted Strickland's requirement that districts offer all-day kindergarten starting next school year.

Under the two-year budget passed in July, all school districts, regardless of statewide ratings, must offer all-day kindergarten beginning in fall 2010, unless they get a waiver from the Ohio Department of Education.

Sen. Gary Cates, R-West Chester, wants to delay that requirement for one year.

"It's basically giving us some breathing room, and hopefully we'll have some better picture of where we're focused on resources, going into that second year," Cates said. "It was going to become a burden to figure out how to do this."

A number of school-district officials have raised concerns that they do not have the money to hire additional teachers nor the space for more classrooms.

The bill is drawing fire from a Cleveland-based nonprofit education advocacy group, which noted that not only can schools get a waiver for the 2010-11 school year, they also can partner with child-care centers for classroom space.

"Why should we delay the full-day kindergarten implementation for the entire state if many districts are willing and able to implement this change in 2011?" said Katie Kelly, director of GroundWork.

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