

BEVERLY EAVES PERDUE  
GOVERNOR



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## **Gov. Perdue Protects Academic Integrity, Accessibility Of NC Pre-Kindergarten Program**

*Issues Executive Order to Ensure Access for All At-Risk Four Year Olds*

**Raleigh** – Gov. Bev Perdue today instructed the state agency in charge of North Carolina’s pre-kindergarten program to preserve the high standards, quality and accessibility of this crucial academic program for at-risk children.

The General Assembly’s budget made significant changes to NC Pre-K (formerly known as More at Four). Changes include a 20% cut in funding that reduces the availability of the program to at-risk children, and the transfer of the program from the Department of Public Instruction to the Department of Health and Human Services.

Thereafter, a North Carolina Superior Court judge issued a decision declaring some of the General Assembly’s changes inconsistent with the constitutional right of North Carolina’s children to obtain a sound basic education. In particular, the judge declared that North Carolina shall not deny any eligible at-risk four year old admission to NC Pre-K, and shall provide the quality services of NC Pre-K to any eligible at-risk four year old that applies.

Governor Perdue today signed an executive order directing DHHS to maintain and strengthen the program’s high academic standards and eliminate all admission barriers to at-risk preschool children. The order also requires DHHS to work closely with North Carolina’s education agencies during the transfer process in order to ensure and preserve NC Pre-K’s quality and academic integrity.

“It is absolutely essential that this program remain an academic Pre-K program,” said Gov. Perdue. “Data has proven that at-risk children who complete a year of academic preschool education show accelerated learning in language, math, social awareness and other skills – skills

that persist through kindergarten and first grade. These children are far more likely to succeed in a career or college down the road.”

Consistent with the judge’s order, the Governor’s order also directs DHHS to provide services to all at-risk applicants. “If the funds that the General Assembly has provided are insufficient to cover the constitutional mandate for these services, I will call upon the legislature to appropriate additional funds to meet our obligation,” said Gov. Perdue. “However, if additional funds become necessary for NC Pre-K, the General Assembly must not inflict further cuts on other educational programs.”

“I will continue to fight to make sure our children have access to the quality education system that our Constitution guarantees,” she said. “It’s a system that educators, advocates and legislators have worked hard to build for decades; it’s the heart and soul of North Carolina.”

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