

Ohio House passes bill to standardize kindergarten age requirements

By **Laura Hancock**
Cleveland.com

COLUMBUS, Ohio - The Ohio House on Wednesday passed a bill that seeks to end confusion over kindergarten cutoff dates.

[House Bill 114](#) passed unanimously, 93 to 0. The bill now heads to the Senate for consideration.

The bill states a child must be 5 years old by the first day of instruction for kindergarten.

[Current state law](#) requires local school boards to pass resolutions requiring children to be 5 by Aug. 1 or Sept. 30 to enter kindergarten. Prior to 2001, the law set the cutoff for the entire state at Sept. 30. But since then, each district has had the option to set it at Aug. 1 or Sept. 30.

But under the current protocols, a student who turns 5 on Aug. 2 wouldn't be able to start kindergarten if they lived in a district with an Aug. 1 cutoff – even if the school year doesn't start until Aug. 20. Meantime, families see neighboring districts with Sept. 30 cutoffs, and realize if they had lived a few miles away, their child would already be in school.

HB 114 would apply to traditional public, charter and STEM schools.

The bill faced no committee opposition from parents or education groups.

Sponsored by GOP Reps. Adam Bird, of the Cincinnati area, and Rep. Kevin Ritter, of Marietta, the lawmakers told colleagues on the House floor the bill ends the confusion.

"This legislation offers a simple solution," Ritter said.

“Sending your kid to kindergarten is a little bit traumatic,” Bird said, after finishing a poem he composed about preparing kindergarteners for their first day of school. “This will add some common sense and consistency.”

The House Education Committee amended the bill May 6 to allow some exceptions to the bill’s cutoff date for gifted children.

According to the amendment, children who are younger than 5 by Jan. 1 can be admitted to kindergarten early under a school district’s student [acceleration policy](#). Schools can admit 4-year-olds who will turn 5 by Jan. 1 if they are tested and shown to be ready for a kindergarten program.

The exceptions for gifted children are allowed under current law. Bird said it was a mistake that the exemptions weren’t included in the bill when it was unveiled.