

*Nothing is politically right  
that is morally wrong.*



*Free and fair discussion  
is the firmest friend of truth.*

## MISSOURI SENATE JEFFERSON CITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Legislation to Help Parents Select Quality Early Childhood Centers Heard by Senate Committee** ***Sen. Shields' Bill Creates Quality Rating System for Early Childhood Learning***

JEFFERSON CITY – Parents may soon have the benefit of a recommendation system to help them choose the best early childhood learning center to fit their child's needs if legislation presented to the Senate Health, Mental Health, Seniors and Families Committee today passes. Senate Bill 4, sponsored by Senate Leader Charlie Shields, creates a quality rating system for early childhood education in Missouri.

"We know the quality of a hotel we stay in – three, four or five star – but we do not know the quality of the education center where we enroll our most precious asset, our children," said Shields, R-St. Joseph.

[Senate Bill 4](#) would create a quality rating system for early childhood and before-and after-school programs that operate in the state. The system will allow consumers and parents to compare high quality programs and creates a structure of accountability for policymakers and those who fund the programs.

Shields has worked with early childhood education leaders in the state as well as researched similar programs in other states to develop a plan that fits Missouri's early childhood education system.

Meg Bartlett, executive director of the Mary Lee Johnston Community Learning Center in Columbia said her center that serves 90 children 6 months through 6 years old is taking part in a pilot quality rating program.

"One thing we learned was to update our family surveys to ask families 'how are you doing?'" Bartlett said. "This helped us understand problems many of our families were facing and work with them individually to help improve the quality of service to our families and not just our children."

Shields said Missouri ranks 30<sup>th</sup> in the nation in the percentage of young adults with college degrees. He, and others who testified in support of the bill, stated investing in making sure children are ready and eager to learn by the time they enter kindergarten could change the tide.

"We must work to improve education along its entire spectrum, because we know that children who enter kindergarten prepared to learn have a much better chance of attaining an education past high school. That is why it is so important that we do everything we can to help our children succeed from their earliest years," Shields said.

A summary as well as full text of the bill can be found by visiting [www.senate.mo.gov](http://www.senate.mo.gov) and doing a keyword search for SB4. It must be voted do pass by the Senate Health, Mental Health, Seniors and Families Committee before consideration by the full chamber.

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