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### **Early Childhood Education Code Amendment Proposed to State Board of Education**

An amendment to the New Jersey's early childhood education regulations was proposed today to the State Board of Education. The amendment would allow the Commissioner of Education to waive a district's obligation to implement a full-day, full-year early childhood education program in September 2001. Under the amendment, the Commissioner may waive the requirement if the Assistant Commissioner of Facilities and Transportation and the Assistant Commissioner of the Division of Early Childhood Education determine that it is impossible for the district to meet the September deadline.

All of the following circumstances would have to exist in order for the Commissioner to waive the district's early childhood obligation:

- Existing school facilities in the district lack the required functional capacity;
- Additional permanent school facilities in the district will not be available by the deadline;
- There is insufficient land within the district on which to situate temporary classroom units; and
- There are insufficient community providers

If the waiver is granted, the Commissioner shall establish the scope of the full-day, full-year early childhood programs that must be provided at that time and shall, after consultation with the New Jersey Economic Development Authority and the district, establish a plan addressing the capacity shortfall. The Commissioner would also set timelines for when the full-day, full-year early childhood programs for all three-year-olds and for all four-year-olds will be provided.

"There are clearly some serious issues that led us to ask for the board to approve this amendment to the state's early childhood education regulations," said Commissioner of Education Vito A. Gagliardi, Sr. "There are a handful of districts that are having genuine difficulty in identifying facilities in which to house their full-day, full-year programs. It is for these relatively few districts that it is appropriate to provide additional time."

"The early childhood program for Abbott district children has been going extremely well, with the vast majority of districts well-prepared to offer preschool. It is through these efforts that the children will enter kindergarten ready to achieve our rigorous academic standards."