A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE "APSEED" PILOT PROJECT AND APPROPRIATE FUNDS
FOR THAT PURPOSE.

Whereas, ApSeed Early Childhood Education, a North Carolina–based nonprofit, is
dedicated to improving kindergarten-readiness through early intervention; and
Whereas, ApSeed's goal is to ultimately reduce long-term remediation costs to the
State by improving third grade reading scores; and
Whereas, ApSeed provides touchpads called "seedlings" to low socioeconomic status
families with preschool-age children; and
Whereas, these preschool-age children become kindergarten-ready by learning
shapes, colors, numbers, and letters; and
Whereas, the seedlings are loaded with family-friendly and easy-to-use learning
applications chosen by kindergarten experts; and
Whereas, ApSeed was launched in 2016 by former North Carolina State Board of
Education member Greg Alcorn to provide a significant return on investment; and
Whereas, privately funded programs are active in the following counties: Rowan,
Davie, Davidson, and Yadkin; and
Whereas, State funding will provide a formal test in counties that represent size and
regional diversity in North Carolina; and
Whereas, seedlings are deployed by Head Start, the North Carolina Prekindergarten
(NC Pre-K) program, and various local health departments to serve our target market of low
socioeconomic status families; Now, therefore,
The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1.(a) The Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Child
Development and Early Education (Division), shall establish a three-year pilot project to
implement the "ApSeed" program, a program designed to prepare preschool-age children, ages
birth through four years of age, for prekindergarten through an interactive learning device known
as a "seedling" (a device similar to an iPad). The seedling provides games varying in skill level
depending on the age and capability of the child and advances in level as the child gains
proficiency.

SECTION 1.(b) The following counties shall participate in the pilot project
described under subsection (a) of this section: Forsyth, Hoke, New Hanover, Watauga, and
Yadkin. Each of those counties shall select preschool-age children to participate in the pilot
project the county, in its discretion, identifies as having the greatest need, taking into
consideration poverty level as a factor.
SECTION 2.(a) There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Child Development and Early Education (Division), the sum of two million five hundred thousand dollars ($2,500,000) in nonrecurring funds for each year of the 2021-2023 fiscal biennium to provide for the equipment and costs associated with the "ApSeed" pilot project established by this act. These funds shall be allocated to the five counties participating in the pilot project, with each county receiving an amount up to five hundred thousand dollars ($500,000), as determined by the Division, for each year of the 2021-2023 fiscal biennium.

SECTION 2.(b) For the 2023-2024 fiscal year only, the Director of Budget shall also include in the base budget, as defined by G.S. 143C-1-1(d)(1c), the amount of nonrecurring funds needed to support the pilot project established in this act. Upon completion of the pilot project, any unexpended funds shall revert back to the General Fund.

SECTION 3. Within six months after completion of the pilot project, the Division shall submit a report to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services, the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, and the Fiscal Research Division. The report shall include, at a minimum, each of the following:

1. The number of children served, by age and county.
2. The skills gained by the participants as compared to those children who did not participate in the pilot project.
3. The extent of parental involvement in the pilot project.
4. Total project costs, including any administrative costs.
5. The amount of funds needed to expand the program statewide.
6. Any other relevant information deemed appropriate.

SECTION 4. This act becomes effective July 1, 2021.