

AUDITOR

FROM PAGE B4

not doing a good job on that at this point, then we don't want to expand that out to other kids." The audit's findings on kindergarten readiness between 2018 and 2023 "revealed overall kindergarten readiness levels below 50% for each year with performance declining in the most recent three years."

"So, step one would be to make sure our pre-schools are performing to the highest level they can be," Ball said, adding that her takeaway would be to fix that first.

Only about 27% of Kentucky's 4-year-olds were enrolled in a state-funded preschool program during the 2023-24 school year, according to data presented last week to Beshear's Pre-K for All Advisory Committee. Kentucky's neighbor, West Virginia, which offers universal pre-K, enrolled 67% of its 4-year-olds in a state preschool program during that same time. Iowa and Oklahoma enrolled 66% of their 4-year-olds.

Ball's audit report of KDE said "widespread improvements are needed across the agency." For about 45 minutes, Ball gave lawmakers an

overview of the more than 550-page document Monday. KDE did not address lawmakers during the meeting.

The General Assembly passed legislation in 2024 directing the auditor to review the education agency.

Ball said that it was an opportune time to do the audit as KDE crafts its strategic plan and "and this will help them, I think, quite a bit to be able to accomplish that in the most effective way." Also, lawmakers will deliberate the next biennial state budget when they reconvene in Frankfort in January.

The auditor emphasized during her presentation a need for KDE and the Kentucky Board of Education to have measurable benchmarks instead of broad goals and to improve communication issues between education leaders in Kentucky.

Ball also encouraged lawmakers to think about how the legislature can address issues with budget appropriations, such as providing funding for math and literacy coaches and addressing a shortage of school counselors. The auditor said her team found that 628 more counselors are needed in Kentucky.

"We discovered that

nearly half of all school districts don't meet the recommended counselor to student ratio of 1 to 250 students," Ball said. "And that actually sounds like quite a lot to me, even as it is, but that's our goal right now."

The School Safety and Resiliency Act passed in 2019 set a goal for school districts to have at least one counselor for every 250 students. It also said counselors should spend at least 60% of their time providing direct services to students.

The audit also covered some financial issues, including a finding that KDE failed to use \$250 million that could have gone into bolstering underfunded areas of education during fiscal years 2021-24. However, the department disputed the finding in its response to the report.

Ball also said that KDE could do more when it comes to sexual assault prevention and raising awareness in schools. Some issues auditors found were that there is not a database to track middle and high school coaches being investigated or charged with inappropriate behavior towards minors. Also, the Kentucky High School Athletic Association (KHSAA) does not have

a tracking system for Title IX complaints.

Title IX is a federal law that prohibits sex-based discrimination in education programs that receive federal funding. The law has gained attention recently after a federal judge reaffirmed his decision to block Biden administration Title IX rules, including those aimed at protect-

ing LGBTQ+ students from discrimination in schools, earlier this year.

Ball said "boys playing in girls sports" is "still a national issue" that can come up in Title IX complaints. The General Assembly passed a law banning transgender womens and girls from playing on female sports teams in the state in 2022.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

The Public Service Commission of Kentucky issued an order of July 31, 2025, scheduling a public comment meeting to be held on September 8, 2025, at 5 p.m., Eastern Daylight Time, at Jefferson Community & Technical College: Hovarth Auditorium, 1000 Community College Dr., Louisville, KY 40272 for the purpose of hearing public comments on Kentucky Utilities Company and Louisville Gas and Electric Company applications for adjustment of its electric and gas rates and approval of certain regulatory and accounting treatments in Case Nos. 2025-00113 and 2025-00114.

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The Webster County PVA Office is now accepting resumes to possibly fill a Full Time and/or Part Time Positions that have been allocated to this office.

Resumes can be dropped off on or before August 29, 2025 at the Office of the Webster County PVA on the Ground Floor of the Courthouse in Dixon, Ky.

Webster County PVA Office
PO Box 88
Dixon, Ky. 42409
Ph. 1 (270) 639-7016



WEBSTER COUNTY FISCAL COURT

INVITATION TO BID

Webster County Fiscal Court will be accepting bids for the removal and installation of a 60-foot bridge on Slaughters Elmwood Road Crossing over (East Fork Deer Creek).

Bids will be opened and read August the 25th at the Fiscal Court meeting beginning at 9:00 A.M at the Webster County Senior Center, Dixon KY.

Bids shall be delivered to the office of Webster County Judge/Executive Steve Henry in a marked, addressed sealed envelope, or mailed to P.O. Box 155 Dixon, KY 42409.

Webster County Fiscal Court reserves the right to accept and/or reject any and/or all bids, or any part thereof, and to waive all formalities in awarding the bid.

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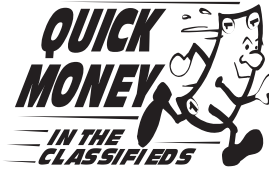
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