

ELGIN/NEW LEIPZIG PUBLIC SCHOOL

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Home of the Coyotes

Dr. Sherlock Hirning, Superintendent
Mr. Terry Bentz, High School Principal
Mr. Jared Bollom, Elementary Principal

March 11, 2025

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Senate Education Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 1497, relating to age requirements for an approved four-year old program.

My testimony stems from a recent experience with two 4-year old children (twins) whose birthdays are August 3. The current statute requires children "to reach the age of 4 years old before August first in the year of enrollment." Unfortunately, these two children were denied the developmental services of a pre-school program for four-year old children because of a hard and fast birthday deadline in current statute. They missed the deadline by three days and no flexibility for considering academic talent or ability and social/emotional readiness is available under current statute like it is under current statute regulating entrance into a kindergarten program for 5-year old children. After discussing this matter with our pre-school teacher and realizing the ability and talent of these two children, it was very unfortunate that there was no flexibility and discretion available to allow these two children to have the opportunity to develop their readiness skills to enter kindergarten next year.

The current statute regulating kindergarten entrance also has an August first deadline for enrollment as a 5-year old. However, it allows for developmental and readiness screening if the child's birthdate is after August first, but will be five years old before December first of the year of enrollment. Passage of HB 1497 would allow the same flexibility and individual consideration of a child's developmental stage for 4-year old programs, as the current statute allows for entrance into kindergarten programs at age five (5). All children do not mature and develop at the same pace and through the same means, so a "one-size fits all" regulation does not seem reasonable for 4-year old program entrance. In today's education world where increasing attention and emphasis is placed on preparing children to be "ready" for kindergarten at age 5, it seems logical and justifiable to allow the same entrance flexibility for our 4-year old programs as is allowed for entrance to kindergarten programs in our State.

With due consideration, I urge this committee's favorable action to support passage of this bill and forward it to the full Senate for consideration. Thank you for your time and consideration today.

Sincerely,

Dr. Sherlock Hirning,
Superintendent
Elgin-New Leipzig School District

*The mission of the Elgin/New Leipzig Public School District is to provide positive and safe environment that promotes lifelong learning to all individuals.
This institution is an equal opportunity provider.*