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# **Lisbon Public Schools**

## **School District No. 19**

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*"Providing Equal Opportunities for Employees and Students"*

March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023

SB2012

Dear House Appropriations,

I am writing in opposition of SB2012 as it stands. To my knowledge, as it stands, SB2012 would reduce, if not eliminate, funding that has provided learning opportunities to many children in my community that would have not otherwise been available. The funding that has been previously allotted helped to fund a valuable Pre-K program, Waterford Upstart. This program has been very beneficial to many families in our community by giving their child an opportunity to experience preschool skills that may not have been available to them without this program.

As the Elementary Principal of Lisbon Elementary School, I see high value in this program. Our reading data over the past two years for kindergarten and first grade has reached its highest marks in a long time. Our current kindergarten class has 67% of its students at or above the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile in reading. Yes, we have made curricular adjustments and enhancements along the way to reach the needs of our students, but we are seeing more students entering kindergarten with high skills because of their participation in the Waterford Upstart program. We are currently registering students for the upcoming kindergarten year and have reported having 30 out of 36 incoming students that have signed up for the program and are actively using it.

I can personally testify to the validation of this program. I registered my own son in the Waterford Upstart program as he will be attending Kindergarten in the fall of 2023. I have two older children that are currently in 4<sup>th</sup> grade and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. My wife and I know and strongly believe in the value of reading to our children and have done so faithfully every night because it is a small thing that can produce large returns in the future. Our first two children did not have the Waterford Upstart program when they entered kindergarten. We see a big difference not only in the ability level between our son in the program and our daughters who did not have the program, but also in his confidence and excitement about entering school. He loves doing his "school work" when his sisters are doing their schoolwork at home.

It is my personal feeling that this program is well worth the small price tag in order to allow all children the opportunity be better prepared when entering kindergarten. With no public preschool in our area, students are limited to proper access in building these basic skills. This program is able to fill those gaps and provide this service without an additional financial burden on the parents. I hope you would consider the value of this program that it provides for many students not only in my community, but also across the state.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Zahrbock  
Lisbon Elementary Principal & Dad of a Preschool student