

Chairman Heinert and Members of the House Education Committee,

Hello, my name is Erin Quinn, and I am here representing myself and my two daughters, Ida and Nora. I am testifying to urge you to reconsider the current law that sets preschool age limits solely based on the date of birth. While these regulations may have been well-intentioned, they are not always in the best interest of our children, especially when individual development and school-specific circumstances are taken into account.

As a parent of two daughters who missed the preschool program's age cutoff by just two days, I have experienced firsthand how restrictive and unfair these rules can be. My daughters, both of whom were eager and ready to begin their educational journey, were initially allowed to start the program due to an exception granted by our local school. The school, having not met its grant requirements for the year, showed understanding and accepted my girls into the program. They had no reservations about their participation, given their developmental progress, strong language skills, and eagerness to learn. Both girls had settled in well, formed friendships, and were thriving in the learning environment.

Unfortunately, after just 2.5 weeks, we were informed that my daughters would not be allowed to continue due to the state's age eligibility rule. This abrupt decision left us heartbroken, but what truly devastated my daughters was the emotional toll it took on them. After just beginning to feel the joy of attending school, engaging with classmates, and exploring new learning experiences, they were told they could no longer participate. The sudden disruption in their lives not only caused sadness and confusion but also led to them missing their school environment and the friends they had made. The emotional strain on them was overwhelming, and I know I am not alone in feeling that such a system is failing to prioritize the needs and well-being of children like mine.

The current rule does not account for the natural variation in children's development or the unique circumstances of each school. A child who is ready to engage and learn should not be excluded based solely on an arbitrary cutoff date. By giving local schools the autonomy to assess each child's readiness—taking into consideration individual development, language skills, and available classroom space—local communities would be better positioned to serve the needs of their students. If a school determines that a child is ready for preschool, there should be no reason to deny that child the opportunity to participate based solely on the month or day of their birth.

This flexibility would allow children who are developmentally ready for the program to start learning and growing, without the constraints of an age limit that often does not reflect the true needs of the child. Furthermore, it would allow schools to make decisions that are in the best interest of their students, while also ensuring that they can manage vacancies and enroll children who will benefit most from the program.

I respectfully ask that you reconsider the current age limit rule and give local schools the flexibility to make decisions based on each child's developmental readiness. By doing so, we can ensure that every child has the opportunity to experience the educational foundation they

deserve—one that helps them grow emotionally, socially, and academically, without being held back by a rigid rule that does not reflect their individual needs.

Thank you for your time and for considering this important change that would benefit countless children and families across our state.

Sincerely,
Erin Quinn
(701) 373-5959