

ELGIN/NEW LEIPZIG PUBLIC SCHOOL

DISTRICT #49

110 West St. N
PO Box 70
Elgin, ND 58533-0070
701-584-2374 - telephone
701-584-3018 - fax
www.gcs.k12.nd.us



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

Home of the Coyotes

January 29, 2025

Mr. Chairman and Members of the House 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, but 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 development stage for 4-year old programs as is allowed for entrance into kindergarten programs. 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 stipulations. This seems more than justifiable in today's education world where increasing attention and emphasis is placed on preparing children to be "ready" for kindergarten at age 5.

With due consideration, I urge this committee's favorable action to support passage of this bill and forward it to the full House of Representatives 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.*