February 23, 2015

Madam Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Julie Slade-Kamatchus. I am a licensed family child care provider with a four star Parent Aware Rating. (Highest rating). I have been doing day care for 10 years. I am also a licensed social worker and have worked as a school social worker. I am also a mother. One of my kids has special needs also.

I am strongly opposed to public preschool for 4 year olds for many reasons. I feel like it is just putting a band-aid on issues and trying to “pigeon hole” all kids into something that has been proven ineffective. Children and adults have different learning styles, come from different backgrounds and don’t all have the same needs. This means that kids that aren’t developing as a “typical child” may develop or as expected may fall through the cracks. It happens already in grade school and high schools. It is important that we not let that happen to the younger children as well.

Another reason that I oppose this is that it just isn’t healthy for our children to be shipped off to a school for eight hours a day so parents don’t have to worry about child care costs .We are not “herding cattle here.” We are rising the next generation. When someone has a child, to me that child should be one of the most valued and important people in their lives. I feel like sometimes child care is viewed as like this “necessary evil.” When in reality, we spend more time with the children than the parents do – waking hours. So we have a large and important influence on them. I feel that sometimes parents look at their child and think they need the best clothes, the best of everything but when it comes to child care it’s just something they are forced to have to do if they work. I think society perpetuates this also.

I also really worry about this idea because it is putting way too much pressure on kids. Kids have so many pressures already these days and it seems to only get worse. My fear is if we shove kids even earlier into school all day long that we may stop their desire to learn. What an awful way to start the education process. Not to mention that they have 12 more years of education not even counting college.

To me learning should be interesting and fun. In my Parent Aware classes, my degree and experiences I have learned the importance of teaching the child where the child is at and a way that he or she can learn. Not just teaching one way and that is it. I follow the ECIPS (Early Indicators of Progress) - do lesson plans, use a curriculum and Gold Assessment tools to assist in this process. This also helps me take a look at where the kids are at socially and emotionally. I have heard from some kindergarten teachers that the kids were really missing out on this part more than anything. That without these skills they were having a way more difficult time learning. If you can’t get along, sit and listen, have friends etc. how can you concentrate on school work? The basic needs to be met. (Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs) Plus add the additional requirements of kindergarteners these days. Being a kid is hard as it is. Kids don’t need more pressure and less support.

In addition to these reasons, I am also very concerned that children will get cheated out of a healthy childhood. We all know how important that is and how an unhealthy childhood affects development throughout life. I think it is imperative that children get the extra attention, love and care they get being in a home child care instead of at school all day at age 4. I am assuming that there would be 20 or more kids per class. Maybe add one or two aides. At the same time, my goal is to have 6 child care children in my care. I will have the time to listen to each and every child. I will have time to play games with them, do art projects, work on prewriting skills etc.. Children need this to thrive. It is so important that children know they are loved and accepted. I truly believe children that don’t get this as kids they will seek it out in very unhealthy ways as they grow up and become adults.

Not only is this sad and horrible for the kids themselves, but also for all of us as our future citizens and adults need to be as stable as possible. Life itself has enough ups and downs. Children need to be given the tools and be nurtured to be able to handle what life throws at them. They don’t need to be stuck in some classroom all day long because it is cheaper than having them in child care. They will have plenty of time to be in a classroom setting all day.

Children need the attention home child care providers can provide. By being sensitive to the child’s needs and the family’s needs I really think we make a difference. Childhood isn’t a race. Children are not mini adults. We need to make sure that children get the building blocks they need to become healthy adults.

Our society is already so full of unhealthy adults. People shooting each other or domestic violence. It is so bad that we have become almost immune to hearing the news unless it is particularly violent. It was hard hearing my son talk about the lock down drill the first time when he started kindergarten this year. It would have been worse if this didn’t take place however I realize that. They are making white boards that are bullet proof- how scary is it that we have a need for that?

In my nine years of college I took many classes. Many stick out, but one in particular always has. It was a juvenile delinquency class. I will never forget what the professor said. “Violence is the last act of a powerless person.” It is true. We need our children to have the support they need on a daily basis to know that they do have power. They do count. They are listened to and cared for. Self-esteem is such an important issue. When a child has a high self-esteem it makes dealing with other life issues much easier. Also, it can help them not be as vulnerable to the negative issues – drugs, alcohol, etc. In addition to this it seems obvious that the people that are in trouble with the law and/or violent in our society would act differently if they felt good about themselves.

Please consider this when you make your decision. There is nothing more important than the health and well being of ***all***of our children.

Thank you so much for your time.

Sincerely,



Julie A. E. Slade-Kamatchus

Licensed Social Worker and Licensed Child Care Provider (Owner and Operator of Julie’s Creative Kids)

