

February 19, 2015

Dear Madam Chair and Esteemed Members of the House Education Innovation Policy Committee,

My name is Hollee Saville and I have been a licensed family childcare provider in St. Michael for more than nine years. I have also worked in centers and public preschool and kindergarten programs. I am also a trainer, consultant, and mentor for early childhood educators and hold a Masters in Early Childhood Education. I implore you to vote against HF46, the Universal Preschool bill.

I have many concerns with the push for universal preschool. When we are talking about children and their education, nothing is universal. There is no research that proves that formal preschool is beneficial. However, there is evidence that formal preschool programs are overly academic, inappropriately rigorous, and not high quality. Education is not something you do *to* children; it is something to be experienced *with* them. Children need time to enjoy their childhood instead of being treated like mini adults. The countries with the best education systems in the world (Finland, South Korea, Singapore) do not start formal schooling until age six at the earliest, age seven in Finland. They recognize the importance of children being able to explore, create, play, and simply be children before beginning kindergarten. The United States ranks an abysmal 17<sup>th</sup> in the world in education. We need to focus on fixing K-12 education before trying to implement unfounded changes to early childhood education.

Private child care providers and preschools will have difficulty competing with the allure of "free" preschool while dealing with burdensome regulations and certifications that public preschool programs do not face. Schools do not pay property taxes, yet family child care providers have to pay property taxes, Self-Employment taxes, and myriad other expenses that are not subsidized by taxpayers like schools are. Providers would be forced to raise their rates to make a sustainable income; thus, increasing the cost difference between their programs and the "free" universal preschool programs.

Universal preschool would unnecessarily subsidize people who can already afford to pay for it themselves while placing a burden on other taxpayers. Statistics show as many as 70% of 4-year olds are already enrolled in some sort of "preschool" program. Why would you want to pull children from their existing programs and harm private programs in the process? Universal preschool would also provide disincentive for families to take care of their children.

Even supporters of universal preschool admit that the two studies most frequently used to support it—the High/Scope study of the Perry Preschool and the study of the Abecedarian programs—show that any cognitive advantages over children who did not attend formal preschool disappeared within a few years after completing the programs. These studies were conducted more than 50 years ago! Plus, the experimental groups were very small and the programs were more involved than the preschool programs being pushed today. The groups were not diverse or representative of the United States, Minnesota, or even the full communities in which they were located. Therefore, the studies are neither valid nor relevant for touting universal preschool.

Researchers at Stanford University (Loeb, et al., 2007) found that kindergartners with 15 or more hours of preschool every week were less motivated and more aggressive in class. Children in preschool centers for more than six hours per day had difficulty with cooperation, sharing, and engagement in classroom tasks. A 2007 NICHD (Belsky, et al.) government study found that the more time children spend in center-based care before kindergarten, the more likely they are to get in frequent fights, argue, and be disobedient at school. I have included additional research that I hope you will take the time to read in order to make an informed decision.

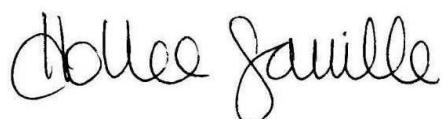
The core problem with all of these so-called fixes to education is that they do not and cannot address the importance of love for children throughout their childhood, including in education. They do not foster a love for learning and do not teach them how to think, only what to think. They do not address the fact that family education is crucial to children's development in every way. The NICHD (2007) study found that quality of parenting—not type, quality, or quantity of child care—was a better predictor of child development. There are already myriad existing resources that could be utilized and highlighted to help families ensure their children are ready for school...and life.

I am also curious how universal preschool's supporters intend to (make taxpayers) pay for it. Do you plan to cut important services or raise taxes when Minnesota families are already struggling? Legislators should be focusing our limited education resources on programs that can make a lasting difference.

David Elkind, a renowned early childhood expert warns that children should not receive academic instruction too early because it can actually damage their self-esteem, reduce their love of learning, and impede the development of their gifts. He explains: "There is no evidence that such early instruction has lasting benefits, and considerable evidence that it can do lasting harm...If we do not wake up to the potential danger of these harmful practices, we may do serious damage to a large segment of the next generation" (*The Hurried Child*, 2011). Please help prevent further damage to our children and vote NO on HF46.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Very truly yours,



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