Madam Chair and members of the committee,

After being a licensed preschool teacher for many years, I chose to begin my own child care business.

The opportunities to nurture the whole child in this environment are astounding. The love and care, educational opportunities, play, being part of a family environment are only the beginning of the reasons I am passionate about Licensed Family Child Care. Other than being home with a Mom or Dad, or other loving family member- I believe this setting is the best environment for a child to grow and thrive emotionally, physically, socially, and educationally.

The harm this bill will do to Family Child care is only one of the reasons I am opposed to "Universal Preschool" bill, HF 46. This bill is wrong on so many levels.

1) There's no evidence to show this is beneficial. However, there is evidence to show that these so-called preschool programs are inappropriately rigorous and not high quality. Studies show that any benefits of formal preschool disappear by 1st grade.

2) Money to pay for it?? Tax increases? Cuts in other programs? Minnesota families are already hurting.

3) Universal preschool assumes that any school program called a "preschool" is high quality and equal. Each child I different and deserves an opportunity the best for the child and family choice!

And please do some research on the importance and benefits of play!

4) 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 didn't attend formal preschool disappeared within a few years after completing the programs. Even 20/20 did a story on it many years ago in which teachers and program participants admitted that it was not a worthwhile "investment" because there were no long-term benefits. These studies were also conducted 30+ years ago! Plus, the experimental groups were very small and the programs were more involved than the preschool programs being pushed today.

5) These programs can't address the importance of love for children throughout their childhood. They don't foster a love for learning and don't teach them how to think, only what to think. They don't address the fact that family education is crucial to children's development in every way. The achievement gap has a lot to do with family involvement in their children's education; when families are involved--whether their children are in childcare, preschools, or at home with them, children do better in every way. We cannot push “education” on children in their formative years. Study and study shows this is not beneficial to their development.

And from a personal perspective, my son was academically ready for Kindergarten for half day only- but not emotionally. He would not have thrived in a full day program at age 5. And we want to push our children into an academic setting at age 4??

Sincerely,

Cindy Bills

Rosemount, MN