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BDR 34-639

Early Admission for Kindergarten and First Grade Students

Chairman Rawson and members of the Human Resources and Facilities Committee, my name is Rita Hemmert and I am the Early Childhood/Kindergarten Program Coordinator with Washoe County School District.

I am here today to speak in opposition to BDR 34-639. Dr. Merrill has spoken to you about the fiscal implications of this bdr and I would ask that you consider another aspect.

First, it does not matter when the cut off date to enter school is, parents are going to ask for exceptions. I receive calls from parents whose child turns 5 on October 1st as well as those with November, and December birthdays. The parent of the October 1st birthday is just as upset as the parent of a child whose birthday is in November or December. Parents contend their

children are ready for Kindergarten. There is more to school readiness than knowing the letters of the alphabet, counting to 100, and reading. The whole child needs to be considered, both in terms of emotional and social readiness. If 4 1/2 year olds are admitted to Kindergarten they will compete with children who are 1 to 1 and 1/2 years older than they are for their entire school career. They will get their drivers licenses when they are Senior's in high school compared to their peers getting a license as a Junior. Emotionally some of these 4 1/2 year olds will not be ready for the stress and pressure from peers and teachers to succeed. These students entering high school will be 13 years old. They will enter college at 17 and be competing with students much older and more mature for grades, social status, and acceptance.

This bill would push children into school too fast. What is wrong with being 4-years old and playing, taking a nap, exploring the

world around them and moving from one activity to another at their own rate, not having to follow the school schedule. School lasts a long time, 13 years to be exact. Let the 5-year olds come to school as the law now prescribes, find school enjoyable, be the leaders in the class, have the self-confidence to succeed and be able to enjoy the few short years of childhood free from the pressures of school.

Second, the waiver, as described in subsection 4, is not enforceable. A child does not exist until he is registered for school. Therefore, the school district does not know to inform parents of the waiver. In addition the school district doesn't have the staff to make sure the waiver is filed. Currently, information is available to the public and sent to childcare providers. The brochure discusses the waiver but to my knowledge no parents have come to the district asking for this form.

Finally, Section 3 specifies that each school district will select a screening test. This could cause a parent to take his child from one district to another, "shopping" so to speak, for the screening test that will make the child eligible for school. This section will also cause a hardship on smaller counties that would have to gather all screening tests available and evaluate them. I feel it needs to be a statewide test that is given to all children so there is consistency among counties.

Thank you listening to my concerns.