

January 19, 2022

To: Chair Jeb Bradley, NH Senate Health and Human Services, and committee members

From: Jane VanBremen, Ph.D., Retired child development specialist; Board of Directors, TLC Family Resource Center, Claremont, N.H.; League of Women Voters Sunapee/Kearsarge Education Committee. jrvanbre@comcast.net

Re: SB326 Establishing the Office of Early Childhood

I am writing to support passage of SB326 which establishes an office of early childhood to coordinate, consolidate, and integrate early childhood programs. The text of the bill makes clear the overwhelming evidence that the early years of children's lives lay down the foundation for healthy brain development, readiness for success in school, social-emotional health, and the ability to thrive in all areas of life. To cite one recent study, [The Long-Term Effects of Universal Preschool in Boston](#), preschool boosts college attendance, SAT test-taking and high school graduation. Preschool also decreases several disciplinary measures including juvenile incarceration.

Throughout my career as a preschool special education teacher, director of parenting programs at a treatment center for women in recovery, and clinical supervisor at a NH family resource center, I have seen the results of high-quality early childhood programs. Not only do these programs encourage the healthy development we want for every child, but in many cases, they can prevent the need for costly interventions later, enable parents to remain in the work force and contribute to the overall strength of New Hampshire's economy.

I have seen first-hand what a high-quality home visiting program such as TLC Family Resource Center can accomplish, both as clinical supervisor and member of the Board of Directors. TLC has always attempted to coordinate its services with other agencies. Recently, a member of the Board of Directors who is also the director of a daycare center was forced to resign from our board because she was so overwhelmed by the crisis in childcare in NH that she had no time to attend board meetings. This weakened the link between two critical services for young children in one N.H. community.

This is but one example of the need for the proposed Office of Early Childhood. All families in NH with young children need a comprehensive, high quality and integrated system of home visiting, family support, childcare and universal PreK for all three- and four-year old children.

In 2018 I participated in a League of Women Voters study of PreK programs in N.H. The U.S. is far behind other countries on pre-K. [The State of Preschool 2020](#), prepared

by the National Institute for Early Childhood Education Research states that N.H. is one of only six states that have no state-funded pre-K. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic growth in state-funded preschool had slowed, but the pandemic imposed huge setbacks, reversing earlier progress. Nevertheless, the League study found that there were many N.H. communities that understood the importance of high-quality early childhood education and were trying to initiate some form of universal pre-K. At some point the federal government will act to support efforts in every state and it behooves N.H. to do everything we can to be ready for this. The Office of Early Childhood, jointly administered by the department of health and human services and the department of education will support and coordinate the early childhood care and education system in N.H. and prepare us to move forward.

I urge the committee to **recommend Ought To Pass on SB326.**

Sources:

Friedman-Krauss, Alison et al, The State of Preschool 2020, National Institute for Early Education Research, Rutgers University Graduate School of Education, 2021.

Guthrie Gray-Lobe, Parag A. Pathank & Christopher R. Walters, The Long-Term Effects of Universal Preschool in Boston. National Bureau of Economic Research, May 2021.

League of Women Voters New Hampshire Survey of NH school districts offering publicly funded Pre-K classes to students without special needs. Jan. 2019.

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