

Senate Bill 321  
Testimony in Opposition  
Date: March 12, 2015

Chair Roblan and Senate Committee on Education Members,

I'm Susan Farmer, a licensed teacher and my credentials are listed for you.

- B.S. in Early Childhood Education 1976, Peabody/Vanderbilt University.
- Specialized 4-year Degree focusing solely on Birth through age 8
- Former kindergarten teacher (4 years)
- Currently Licensed in Oregon
- Past 10 years have specialized in early reading intervention, learning disabilities, specifically reading/dyslexia
- Privately tutor children with reading disabilities

My understand is truancy is influencing a push for SB-321, which I oppose. One principal's testimony [Ex 32] shared a chronic absenteeism rate of 11 % for kindergartners and 9% of first graders (they missed at least 18 days or more of the school year). One principal [Ex. 39] had a 26.5% chronic absentee rate in his first graders in 2012-13.

Since 5 and 6-yr-olds **are** compulsory already, if they are enrolled, these principals testified they can't get the **current** compulsory children to attend. Why? And how will forcing 5 year olds into kindergarten magically change this ability? I believe kindergarten absenteeism would actually increase.

Other research cited was from NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) was cited in testimony [Ex 32] saying there is "no academic benefit from retention" but said school retention gives "threats to the social-emotional development of the child..." This study regards retention – **repeating** a grade – It is irrelevant to delaying school entry.

Reference was made [Ex 32] to a 2003 article by Dr. Hermine Marshall. His analysis of previous research concluded a child's age or maturity made no difference in "developmentally appropriate kindergartens." Key words: "developmentally appropriate." Most of the research was conducted 15 or more years ago, before rigorous academic focus in kindergartens.

A Tigard principal testified, [Ex 32] – quote – "Kindergarten has changed. Kindergarten is academics that includes 90 minutes of reading instruction with an expectation that **all** will be reading at year's end, one hour of math instruction,...[etc]. If 5-yr-olds come to kindergarten not developmentally ready for such mandatory rigorous academics, how is this "developmentally appropriate" especially for immature child. Do we want 5-yr-olds already stressed and ashamed because they can't read?

Not one person has offered evidence that children who start school at age 6-7 are more likely to need special education or extra help in school.

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Senator Kruse mentioned a possible compromise to lower the compulsory age to 6. I would consider that a compromise.... if and only if parents get to choose whether their 6-yr-old enters 1st grade, or kindergarten.

If the schools are concerned about children starting school too late and failing, then screen all children who are entering school and put them in classes which ARE developmentally appropriate for where THEY are, so they don't get the peer pressure and shame of seeing others way ahead of them. I used to know of a U.S. Army-base that screened and placed lower-functioning 1st graders into a "pre-1st grade" class, taking 2 years for 1st grade.

I delayed all 3 of my children's formal schooling because they were not developmentally ready. It concerns me that a law would have far more power than my parental judgment to decide what is in my child's best interest.

Previous testimony [EX-38] referenced the Perry Preschool Program in support of mandated kindergarten. I've provided links explaining the 1960's Perry project followed preschoolers into adulthood. Preschool reduced remedial education and crime, so ultimately saved money. Perry also had 1 teacher for every 6 children, and teachers spent 90-minutes in each home weekly, showing mothers how to teach the curriculum at home. Younger and older siblings stayed together in class, and the budget was an equivalent \$11-17,759 per child. Perry has little to do with mandatory kindergarten at Oregon's per-child budget and over-crowded classrooms.

<http://evidencebasedprograms.org/1366-2/65-2>

<http://www.nber.org/papers/w16180.pdf>

I sincerely appreciate your time and attention to the points in my testimony.

Thank you, and I can now answer any questions.

*Susan Farmer*