

Testimony of
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Board of Directors
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Before the
House Committee on Rules
2021 Regular Session
on
SB236

SUPPORT
June 8th, 2021

Chair Smith Warner, Vice Chairs Drazan and Holvey, and members of the committee, thank you for your willingness to listen to my testimony in favor of Bill 236.

My name is Dalia Avello. I serve on the board of directors of the Oregon Montessori Association. I trained as a psychologist. I am also a certified Montessori teacher, have expertise in the fields of education and international development, and have the Endorsement® certification at the highest level in Infant Mental Health. I led my career in international settings, but I have called Oregon my home since 2014.

I testified in favor of this bill in mid May. It was my first time on a forum like this, here in the United States. The interesting thing is that based on the feedback and reactions of everyone in my network, I shouldn't have done it, simply because *this problem should not exist*. These regular people, your constituents, from hairdressers to attorneys couldn't believe that this is a reality. That preschoolers, children that have been alive between 700 and 1,500 *days* would be suspended and expelled from a child CARE program. Emphasis on the irony of the word CARE mixed up in this discussion.

Today you will hear many personal arguments around this bill. You will hear that programs *can't serve the needs of some children*, that children *may do better in another environment*, that expelling is done to *keep other children safe*. Perhaps you will hear some horrible story about a bad child who made a difficult situation impossible with "violence". When you do, I ask you, *what is the role the adults are taking in these arguments? What use are we giving to the experiences that we adults have gathered in the tens of thousands of days we have lived in this world?*

Today, when we hear someone speak against this bill, I invite you to find in their testimony how they are reconciling compassion for a fragile child in need with the professional commitment to provide and care for children they made when the program was created and a license was obtained.

Another issue you may hear in regards to SB236 is that a rule to stop preschool suspension and expulsion from happening is not necessary, or may not be effective. The problem is, that scenario is where we are now, yet every day in the State of Oregon little children and babies have their routine interrupted and are separated from friends and teachers they care for because they are behaving in ways that are reasonable and expected by their age, experiences and development.

I prepared this testimony less than an hour ago when I found out that perhaps this, and the related HB2166 bill may be deemed “not priority” to pass by the legislation in 2021. That it would be ok to wait until 2023 to work on this issue. I ask you, *do you really think this is the time to wait to enact a bill with no/minimal cost? That is supportive for providers and protects children?* A bill that would give adults 5 years of preparation before an end to suspending or expelling young children from early care settings? A bill that is regarded by experts and professionals across multiple disciplines as best practice?

Chair Smith Warner, Vice Chairs Drazan and Holvey, and members of the committee, members of the public. SB236 is not a bill to stop behavior or tell providers what not to do, it is an opportunity for educators and agencies to learn, improve and work together to help out children that have no one else but us. Please, support this bill today.