

12 March 2015  
29195 Tampico Road  
Corvallis, OR 97330

Dear Chair Roblan and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am strongly in opposition to House Bill 321.

I am a twenty-one-year-old college student majoring in English. Having written multiple research reports, including one on family demographics, I wish to explain why my testimony today does not deal with statistics or research. I have repeatedly seen professional researchers study the same issue and present completely different and contradictory findings. Data can be twisted to leave out or oversimplify information and support a particular point of view.

At last Thursday's first public hearing for House Bill 321, several educators cited studies and data that appeared to support their positions, but what they did not present was information about real, individual children. One witness last Thursday stated that age is statistically one of the most important factors in determining school-readiness. In nine years of working with children, I have never reached the conclusion that age determines level of development. As a nanny and babysitter, I have regularly cared for seventeen children from the ages of one to thirteen, and I have interacted with many others at my church.

A seven-year-old girl recently explained to me, eagerly and articulately, her understanding of ancient Egyptian spirituality and the concepts of chromosomes and Down's Syndrome. In contrast, I recently supervised a seven-year-old boy who stutters badly and agonizes over basic math problems. These two children, whom educators want to place in the same category, have disparate levels of cognitive development.

A little boy for whom I was a nanny was walking and running with ease at sixteen months old but could not say a single word. In contrast, I began to talk at five months of age but did not walk until I was eighteen months old. Neither of us has a disability; we are simply developmentally very different.

Children do not mature, mentally or physically, at an equal rate. Age is not one of the best determiners of school-readiness, and forcing all five-year-olds to attend Kindergarten will make "slower" children vulnerable to frustration, low self-esteem, and teasing from their peers.

Students dislike much of their schoolwork as it is: I have seen it in the children I supervise and in the students with whom I attend college. Please do not foster this antipathy to learning by forcing children to study subjects they may not be ready to understand. Mandatory Kindergarten for five-year-olds will promote neither equity nor diversity – it will attempt to press all children into a single mold. I guarantee they will not fit.

Sincerely,



Celia Funk