

Written Testimony of

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Before the Education Committee

**HB 6557 AN ACT CONCERNING SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING.**

March 8, 2021

Good afternoon Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty, and members of the Education Committee.

As a retired primary teacher for forty-five years, I would like to tell you about young children, some of their needs and how schools are failing them. First, all children want and need to be listened to. When a child is not ready to learn, they simply cannot keep up with their peer group. When a child does not feel part of the group or when the child feels they are different from their classmates they will do one of two things. The child will either shut down or act out. As a teacher it is extremely difficult to address that child's needs and keep teaching the other children at the same time. I had to watch that child and be sure he/she did not hurt anyone in the class, be sure that the child did not leave the classroom, did not destroy property all while teaching. It is a teacher's responsibility to keep all children safe. When a child is "young" acting it might be the child is "too" young to be ready to learn. When a child is ten or eleven months younger than the other children in the classroom, they have a difficult time staying focused, learning something they just are not ready to grasp and begin to "act out". They may not attempt to participate, they may break down and cry, they may get up and walk around the classroom, they may hide in the bathroom, they may fall asleep, they may do any number of things except attend to the lesson. They are seen by their classmates as students who do not care about school and who ruin lessons and routine. By the way, young children thrive on routine because they know what to do and have success doing it and pleasing parents, teachers and classmates. My point here is, PLEASE require children to enter kindergarten at a minimum of five years old. Let them be children. Once formal school starts they need to be ready.

My second concern is for preschool children. Some sort of required expectations should be required for this age group because when home schooled, private and religious experience get blended in formal kindergarten they have different expectations. Socialization skills, emotional skills and being toilet trained should be standard.

My third suggestion is for more, many MORE counselors, social workers and school psychologists to help the children and the teachers. Every teacher can name at least one struggling child, one struggling parent and at least one struggling family. In reality, every teacher could name several more. Just because these are "little people" does NOT mean they have little problems. The death of a pet is as detrimental to the child as an adult losing a spouse. They often cannot express what they feel. It is sad to watch children attempt to pretend it is not a big deal when in fact they are really hurting. I spent many a lunch eating with children who had lost a parent, a grand-parent or a pet. Having the time to talk with an adult is critical for healing. Teachers need these professionals to work one on one with these children or to take the class while the classroom teacher (who has bonded with that child) talks

with that child.

Teachers have been asked to do much more than teach. We all want to see our students be successful. We need more help in the primary years. This may be reduced testing times in exchange for more time spent with the children learning how to be kinder. If we could teach without expecting children in the primary grades to meet standards of the common core and work on social and emotional skills I believe we will have happier children, more emotionally stable children, kinder children and in the long run a better world.

Please listen to the primary teachers who have spent hours, days, weeks and years with this age group. We understand their needs, their likes and their dislikes. Too much stress has been piled onto the children. We need to get rid of the "pressure cooker" and look for a safer way to educate our children.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Nancy L. Jones