

Good morning! My name is Jessica Pike, I am a parent from Plainfield. I work locally at Central Vermont Medical Center as a Bachelor prepared Registered Nurse in the Pharmacy department.

I am here today to ask for you to include specific language in the pre-k bill you are considering regarding children with LEAs or IEPs. I understand the committee has already heard from the Agency of Education regarding the proposed bill. I understand that AOE proposed that children with LEAs or IEPs be eligible for a funded third year of pre-k. However, I did not see AOE's recommended language included in the current draft and want to ensure this was specifically noted.

Our son is 4 years old. He is a bright boy who has had an IEP for expressive speech delay since 2 and half years of age. He currently works with a speech and language pathologist 2 times per week and is currently enrolled in a local non-public preschool program. The non-public preschool program and speech therapy has worked extremely well for him this year. He has blossomed and is thriving. He will be 5 years old August 25th and eligible for kindergarten, solely based on his age for school year 2018-2019.

The parenting question we are currently faced with is, "When do we enroll our child into kindergarten?" As we have begun to find answers to this question, which include weighing the advice of educators and others to delay kindergarten until age 6, we have found the people within this decision making process have had several varying interpretations of our son's eligibility for a funded third year of pre-k under the current law. I believe including language in the proposed bill which clearly states the AOE's recommendations regarding children with LEAs or IEPs whom may be eligible for a funded third year would be helpful for families, administrators, and LEA or IEP team members in the decision making process.

In summary, I am asking for your committee to include AOE's recommended definition for child eligibility for children with an LEA or IEP in the pre-kindergarten revision bill. Specific language includes: "children who receive early childhood special education services may access a third year of pre-k funding based on LEA/IEP team placement decision."

I thank you for the opportunity to speak with you. I appreciate your listening, time and empathy for our son's educational story.