

Pre-kindergarten Education Bill

Sec. 1 829; page 2; (1) (c) Provider Requirements—STARS

My name is Betsy Barstow and I am a family home childcare provider and a licensed teacher with several endorsements including Early Childhood Education. The program I run, Nature's Niños (children in Spanish), is an ACT 166 pre-qualified pre-k, natured-based on our 52 acre farm and offers both bi-lingual and Spanish immersion sessions. The population I serve are primarily children from families who do not have both parents working fulltime outside of the home and would not be able to afford pre-k, if it were not for ACT 166.

In 2016 I left my teaching position to open Nature's Niños Pre-k and had it not been for the provision in ACT 166 that allows programs with 3 STARS with a plan to achieve 4 or 5 within a given time frame to be eligible, the opening of my program would have been delayed one year. Please note that the first arena of STARS is regulatory history and is based on the years of a program's existence. New programs do not have a history, only potential, and thus can't achieve any points in arena 1.

The first year of my program was an important one and the majority of my students were four year olds, three of them from bi-lingual families, who would not have had the opportunity for this kind of program before entering kindergarten had it not been for the 3 STAR provision.

I hope that you will reconsider and keep the 3 STAR provision with a plan to achieve 4-5 for ACT 166 pre-kindergarten status, at the very least for new programs. Thank you.

Respectfully,
Betsy Barstow
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