



Romaine Robert Quinn

STATE SENATOR • 25TH SENATE DISTRICT

From: Senator Romaine Robert Quinn
To: Senate Committee on Education
Re: Testimony on Senate Bill 973
Relating to: requiring the community approach to four-year-old kindergarten
Date: February 6, 2024

Thank you Chairman Jagler and members of the Senate Committee on Education for holding this public hearing on Senate Bill 973. As we all know, child care centers are struggling to maintain staff and keep their doors open while keeping rates affordable for families that they care for. This bill looks to be one step in the approach to help these centers.

As more and more schools have responded to state incentives to implement four-year-old and three-year-old kindergarten programs at their facilities, child care centers have seen a decline in the number of children allowed to have a greater ratio of students-to-teachers which are vital to balancing finances and keep facilities operating. Schools have provided education to four-year-olds since Wisconsin became a state, but availability and funding have shifted throughout the decades. When funding again became more available for school districts, most recently with the 4K Start-Up Grants, and needs began to arise in care in communities, more school districts started to again offer 4K in their buildings, affecting child care centers. Putting 4K back into schools has good intentions in areas of the state where child care is and was scarce, but as 408 of the 410 public school districts with elementary education now offering 4K in their schools, child care centers have been impacted.

Currently in Wisconsin there is the option to have a community approach to early education. In the community approach to 4K, school districts contract with community child care centers, private schools, and Head Start programs for the implementation of 4K in the community site. This eases the transition for children to going into school. This bill looks to put some parameters on this approach to education to provide more support to community-based care centers educating the children.

Senate Bill 973 requires schools that offer 4K to contract with family child care centers, group child care centers, and head start agencies that are in good standing with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and intend to offer a four-year-old kindergarten program. The contract must include a minimum net per pupil payment that is not less than 95 percent of the per pupil revenue limit that applies to 4K in the district where the community-based provider is located. Further, transportation is to be provided by the community-based provider and they are allowed to use any curriculum that meets the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards. A staff-to-child ratio that is less than what is required by DCF is also not allowed and 4K teachers at a community-based provider are exempt from the requirement to hold a license issued by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), but must meet specific criteria.

The community approach to early education benefits our child care facilities, schools, and families by reducing childcare costs, leveraging infrastructure, minimizing transitions for the child, decreasing transportation costs, and allowing families to decide what works best for them.

Thank you for your consideration today and I hope that you support this legislation.

Senae Bill 973
Public Testimony
Senae Committee on Education
February 6, 2024

Thank you, Chair Jagler and members of the committee for holding this hearing on Senate Bill 973.

The child care industry for a number of years has been struggling. When investigating the causes that put our child care industry into the current state of financial duress, it was repeatedly and empathically brought to the fore that the transfer of children in 4K to the schools was a major contributor of the financial downfall of the child care industry.

We have certain provider to child ratios that are maintained by the state of Wisconsin. For instance, one provider is required for every four 0-2 year olds. By the time children reach 4K, the provider to child ratio has expanded to one provider for thirteen 4-year olds. When the 4K children switched to attending 4K programs in the public schools, the main source of income that child care facilities used to maintain operations diminished dramatically. Providing childcare for youngest children demands more staffing and resources than the older children.

4K in public schools is at no cost to the parent as it is a part of the public education system in Wisconsin. The state of Wisconsin pays the public school for each student enrolled in the 4K program. SB 973 provides for a community approach to 4K. The school board would contract with family child care centers, group child care centers or head start agencies that hold a license issued by the Department of Children and Families to provide 4K early education. The child care center would then receive 95% of the per pupil revenue limit that applies to 4K pupils in the school district in which the community-based provider is located.

There are benefits of allowing the 4K children to remain with younger siblings in the child care facility as well as the benefit of alleviating the problem of wrap-around care as the 4K student's parent would not have to seek child care services before and after the child's school-day hours.

Of the ten different pieces of child care legislation that this session's legislature has considered, I believe SB 973 is the most significant in addressing the child care issue that is plaguing Wisconsin.

I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have.



JOY GOEBEN

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 5th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

February 7, 2024

Testimony on Senate Bill 973 Senate Committee on Education

Chairman Snyder and honorable members of the Committee, thank you for hearing my testimony on SB 973 relating to the community approach to four-year-old Kindergarten.

Our child care centers are in trouble. One of the many reasons is that when 4K was pulled into the public schools, the most profitable age was removed from child care centers. This reduced profits and increased costs. SB 973 seeks to help save Wisconsin's child care centers. The bill benefits the centers financially and returns a good portion of the control back to the experts in early childhood development and play-based curriculums.

SB 973 focuses on the 'community approach' or 'mixed delivery model', which provides every four-year-old in the community access to a quality, early learning experience, and is recommended by DCF and DPI. The community approach is not new. The concept was introduced in the late 1980's and expanded greatly in the 1990's. The 'community approach' emphasized the need for collaboration and coordination between public schools and community-based early care and education programs.

A review of 4K quality reports by The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) show that over the past 8-years, Wisconsin has met and continues to only meet 3 of 10 quality standards, a dismal 30%. Based on this information, 4K quality is lacking in our public schools. Child care teachers are specifically trained in early childhood education and play-based interactions. They are best suited to evaluate not only four-year-old student performance and program standards but also in the delivery of high quality education and care to young children. Quality 4K is ensured through current DCF regulated licensing requirements.

Under SB 973 parents have the option to open enroll their child into any 4K program, regardless of location. The bill follows the public school open enrollment program and does not change open enrollment procedures. The community approach to 4K in child care centers will positively impact the quality of 4K education, add continuity of care, offer financial stability to the centers, and make life easier and less expensive for parents.

Thank You for your consideration.



JOY GOEBEN

a school district uses the 'community approach,' a common practice is to charge the child care center a 30% to 50% administrative fee. School districts justify the excessive fee to pay for transportation and 'other services.' Generally, the 'other services,' are also DCF licensure requirements, which means the center is paying both DPI and DCF for the same oversight. School districts have also been known to force centers to accept financially detrimental policies that are outside DCF guidelines, like altering staffing ratios and administering standardized tests.



TO: Chair Jagler, Vice-Chair Quinn, and Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Education

FROM: Jeff Pertl, Deputy Secretary
Priya Bhatia, Administrator, Division of Early Care and Education

DATE: February 6, 2024

SUBJECT: Senate Bill 973

Thank you for holding this hearing today. The flurry of legislative proposals around child care on the heels of the Governor's historic investments in Child Care Counts make one thing clear: folks across the state recognize the access and affordability crisis in child care.

While there are many strategies to address this crisis worth exploring, working together to improve and expand the 4-year-old kindergarten (4K), in particular the community approach, would be impactful for many young learners, their families, and providers. **Today, DCF is testifying for information only on SB973** to help policy makers understand the current system, outline potential benefits, and highlight some of the concerns likely to be raised.

Impact of 4K and Early Education

Over the last 30 years, a significant body of research has identified the wide-ranging and long-term benefits of early care and education. Aggregating the most prominent findings, the National Institute of Health notes "studies show that supporting children's early years can lead to:^{i,ii, iii}

- Higher test scores from preschool to age 21
- Better grades in reading and math
- A better chance of staying in school and going to college
- Fewer teen pregnancies
- Improved mental health
- Lower risk of heart disease in adulthood
- A longer lifespan"

Similarly, [Professor James Heckman](#), a renowned economist at the University of Chicago, has calculated a staggering 13% per year return on investment for high quality birth-to-five programs, noting the long-term benefits of greater high school graduation rates, more years of education, higher wages, lower drug use and improved health outcomes.^{iv}

The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS), outlines five domains of development for children as they progress from birth to first grade (from early childhood to elementary school):

- Health and physical development;
- Social and emotional development;
- Language development and communication;
- Approaches to learning; and
- Cognition and general knowledge

For a lot of young learners, 4K is the bridge between early care and education and elementary school. Wisconsin's mixed delivery system approach allows districts and child care providers to braid funds, wrap around care programs, and meet families where they are at. Whether provided in a school or child care setting, 4K is a tremendous equalizer... if families can access it.

Origins of 4K & The Community Approach

Wisconsin was an early adopter of early learning, including education for 4-year-olds in the 1848 Constitution and founding the nation's first kindergarten in Watertown in 1856. However, over the next century rural one-room schools faded from the landscape and by 1980 only six school districts offered 4K.^v

In 1984, 4K was added to the school funding formula (counting the student 0.5 FTE), and later an outreach component was added. Rapid growth in 4K enrollments helped lead to a mixed delivery, community approach model across the state. Today, nearly every school district offers 4K, with over 100 districts offering a community approach.^{vi}

However, despite nearly every district offering 4K, many Wisconsin families cannot access 4K either in their school or in the community. Half-day funding, licensing barriers, and limited space in K-12 schools often limit access or restrict enrollment.

Proposed Legislation

DCF hopes the introduction of SB973 will be a **catalyst for the critical conversations** needed for the expansion of the 4K community approach in a way that meets the needs of families, child care providers and K-12 schools. DCF is committed to working with our partners at the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and stakeholders in the child care and K-12 spaces to evolve Wisconsin's 4K model.

The committee will hear from child care stakeholder groups who broadly support the opportunities presented in SB973. DCF has heard from child care providers interested in offering 4K programs, but believe they are at a disadvantage relative to school districts in setting contract terms, including funding amounts, curriculum, and assessment decisions.

The community approach was created in part to address the financial instability child care programs faced as districts expanded 4K programming. Due to staffing ratios, 4-year-olds are less expensive to care for than infants and toddlers in child care. So, when districts began creating 4K programs in the late 1990s and early 2000s, school enrollments grew, while child care provider enrollments declined. Moreover, child care providers were left with a more expensive and staff-intensive mix of children to serve.

SB973 would provide more **stability and continuity of care** for children and families. Under the current system, some children travel between their part-day school 4K program to their child care provider for wrap around care. This causes disruption for children and can be a transportation burden for families. The 4K community approach reduces these disruptions by providing a seamless educational program and wrap around experience in a single location, offered by a provider parents already know and trust.

Early care and education programs are designed and equipped to serve 4-year-olds. Providers have reported that some families prefer the learning environment that is available through their child care provider, which have been designed and regulated to serve younger children.

Key Issues Identified by Stakeholders

Based on stakeholder feedback, DCF has identified **three priority issue areas** that would need to be addressed to win support from both child care providers and K-12 stakeholders:

- ensure children are fully counted (1.0 FTE) in the school finance system;

- establish a fair payment structure, and
- streamline licensing for 4K teachers.

Providing full day 4K (counting 4K students as 1.0 FTE): Currently, in the school finance formula 4K is only funded as a half day (0.5 or 0.6 FTE) program. Fully counting our youngest learners is an essential update for both child care providers and K-12 school providing 4K, and the current version of the bill does not address this critical issue.

The current part-time policy underserves providers and puts undue financial strain on families who have to pay for child care for the remainder of the day. This model also creates instability for children who need a stable learning environment for the entire time their parents are at work. Funding 4K students at 1.0 FTE creates the opportunity for child care providers to receive adequate funding for providing 4K, while still allowing school districts to retain enough funding for their contract monitoring responsibilities.

Defining per-pupil payments: The appropriate division of per pupil payments between child care providers and school districts is essential to meet everyone's needs and obligations. The current version of the bill requires districts to pay at least 95% of the local per-pupil funding amount. Establishing a fair and reasonable payment structure would bring clarity to this process and greater certainty to the provider market. However, likely further discussion among stakeholders is needed to determine the appropriate balance between provider program costs and district administrative costs.

Rethinking 4K licensure: Ensuring educator credentialing appropriately reflects the knowledge, skill and abilities needed for the early education workforce is vital to maintain and grow high quality programs. However, DPI and K-12 stakeholders have identified concerns with the current licensing approach in SB973.

Child care providers have expressed concerns that DPI's current Birth - 3rd grade license is geared more toward the early elementary years rather than 4K, requiring different credentials and course work than the DCF early care and education license (which covers 4-year-olds in child care outside of a 4K program). Greater alignment in licensure could reduce barriers to participation in the 4K community approach for child care providers.

Additionally, child care staff who earn DPI's Birth - 3rd grade license often can then earn higher wages and better benefits by working in the elementary education system. Rather than creating

alignment between the systems, the current model can perpetuate turn over as educators migrate from early care and education to elementary education. Again, greater alignment in licensing for 4K could make that credential a bridge, rather than a waterfall.

DCF is committed to working alongside child care providers, DPI, K-12 educators and school districts to work through critical conversations and problem-solve through the myriad issues, requirements and considerations outlined by stakeholders today. Resolution will require trade-offs, but these are practical issues that if resolved constructively will benefit all of Wisconsin's children and families. DCF welcomes the opportunity to answer any questions the committee may have.

ⁱ Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute. *The Carolina Abecedarian Project: Groundbreaking follow-up studies*. Retrieved September 16, 2015, from <http://abc.fpg.unc.edu/groundbreaking-follow-studies>

ⁱⁱ Kaplan, R.M. (2014). Behavior change and reducing health disparities. *Preventive Medicine*, 68, 5–10.

ⁱⁱⁱ Reynolds, A. J., Temple, J. A., White, B. A., Ou, S. R., & Robertson, D. L. (2011). Age 26 cost-benefit analysis of the child-parent center early education program. *Child Development*, 82(1), 379–404.

^{iv} "There's more to gain by taking a comprehensive approach to early childhood development." James Heckman. https://heckmanequation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/F_Heckman_CBAOnePager_120516.pdf

^v "The Unique History of Four-Year-Old Kindergarten in Wisconsin" The Wisconsin Council on Children and Families. Sept. 2010 https://kidsforward.net/assets/great_start_6_history_4K.pdf

^{vi} Ibid

Great Start Series: Policy Brief #6

The Unique History of Four-Year-Old Kindergarten in Wisconsin

The Wisconsin Council on Children and Families

September 2010





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This policy brief is a publication of the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families. Dave Edie, Early Education Policy Analyst at the Council, was the primary author.

The Council thanks Jill Haglund, Early Childhood Consultant at the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), and Jim McCoy, former DPI Consultant, for their extensive help in piecing together the history of 4-year-old Kindergarten in Wisconsin—most of the content of this report is from materials they developed or researched.

The paper was produced with the generous support of the Birth to Five Policy Alliance, the Richard and Ethel Herzfeld Foundation, and the Celebrate Children Foundation.

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Great Start Series: Policy Brief #6

The Unique History of Four-Year-Old Kindergarten in Wisconsin

Introduction

Wisconsin has a proud tradition of progressive innovation, largely due to Robert La Follette and the Wisconsin Idea, a concept that emerged among Wisconsin leaders in the early 1900s. The Wisconsin Idea encourages a strong connection between research knowledge, the informed involvement of its citizenry, and the democratic process in forming sound public policy, and it has led to, among other things, groundbreaking legislation regarding the income tax, worker's compensation, unemployment compensation and campaign finance.

But even before the Wisconsin Idea, the state was already an innovative pioneer in 4-year-old Kindergarten (4K). Schooling for 4-year-olds was envisioned way back when Wisconsin was becoming a state; in fact, education for 4-year-olds was part of Wisconsin's Constitution in 1848. As universal public 4-Year-Old Kindergarten (4K) continues to expand across the state, many are not aware that 4K has a history going back over 160 years. The first kindergarten in the United States was founded in Watertown, Wisconsin in 1856, shortly after the first "kindergarten" was opened in Germany in 1837 by Friedrich Fröbel.

We notice that if children are not given the care which takes their stage of human development into consideration, they will lack the foundation for the task ahead in school and for their later lives in general"

- Friedrich Fröbel, 1844

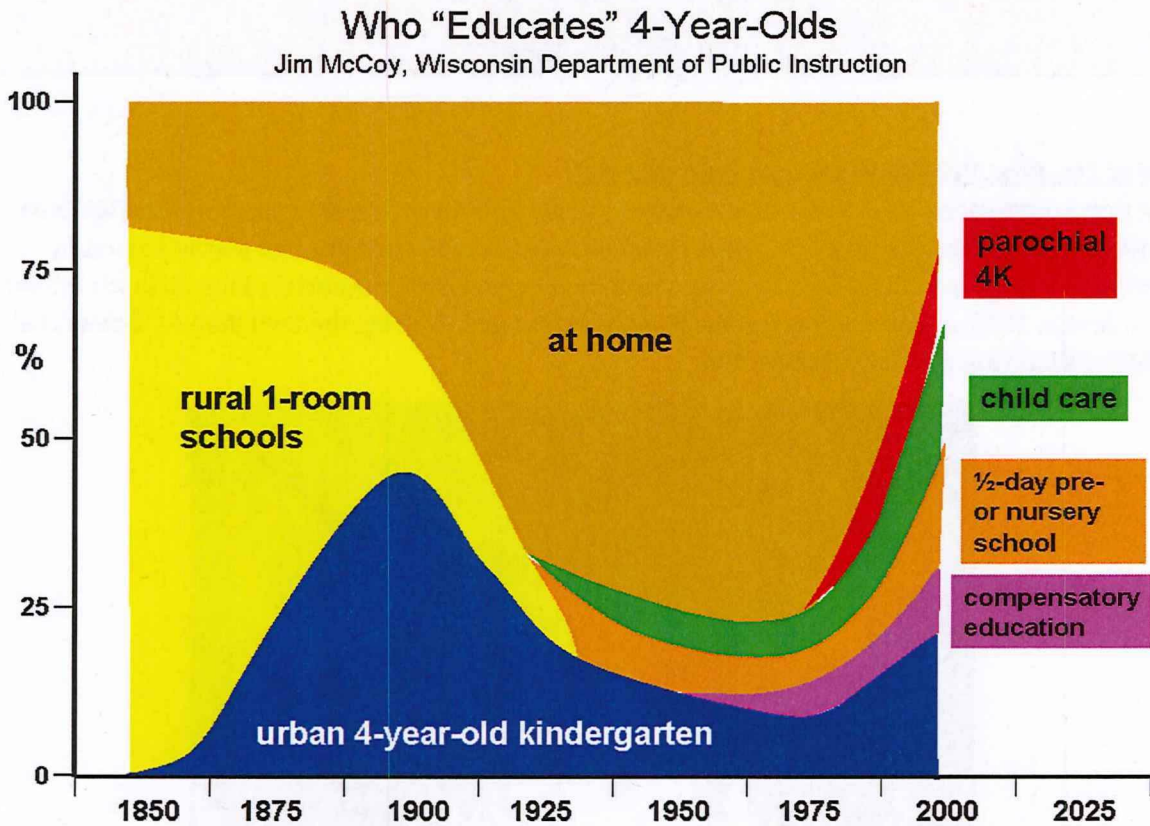
Modern scientific research has strongly reinforced many of Fröbel's theories on early development over a century and a half later. This paper explores the rich and unique history of 4K in Wisconsin, from its innovative beginning, the early growth in the 1800s, the decline from 1900-1980, and the resurgence in the last 30 years.

History Overview

An intriguing historical overview of how 4-year-olds were educated in Wisconsin-- from 1850 to 2000-- was developed by Jim McCoy, a former DPI Consultant, who did extensive investigation on the history of 4K. He developed a graph (see Figure 1) that provides a broad picture of the percentage of 4-years-olds in different education and care settings over time. He estimates that

over 75 percent of 4-year-olds were educated in rural one-room schools in the mid- to later 1800s. By 1900 urban 4-year-old kindergarten was serving nearly half of the state's 4-year-olds, but out-of-home education declined dramatically by 1925 and stayed fairly stagnant until a surge beginning in the 1970s and 1980s. Finally, by 2000 once again over 75 percent of 4-year-olds were in a variety of out-of-home early care and education settings: public 4K, parochial 4K, child care, half-day pre- or nursery school, compensatory education, and compensatory education.

Figure 1



By 2010, over half of Wisconsin's 4-year-olds were in public 4K. The next sections will look more closely at the trends over time from 1850 to 2010.

The Early History: 1840s – 1920s

1848: Education for 4-Year-Olds in the Constitution

Wisconsin may be the only state that included education for 4-year-olds in its original Constitution. Article X, Section 3 of the 1848 state Constitution called for the establishment of district schools, which "shall be as nearly uniform as practicable, and such schools shall be free and without charge for tuition to all children between the ages of 4 and 20 years." ¹ The waves of German immigrants

who came to Wisconsin in the 1800s almost certainly influenced the inclusion of early education in the Constitution, bringing the ideas of the German kindergarten movement begun by Fröbel. According to Department of Public Instruction (DPI) records, it was common for 3- and 4-year-olds to attend one-room schools in the 19th century in Wisconsin.

“...schools shall be free and without charge for tuition to all children between the ages of 4 and 20 years.”

- 1848 Wisconsin Constitution

1856: The First Private Kindergarten in the U.S.

The first kindergarten in the United States was founded in Watertown, Wisconsin by German-born Mararethe Meyer Schurz in 1856. It was based on Fröbel’s work that she had learned about in Europe. Her husband Carl Schurz became a prominent statesman, supporting Lincoln in his bid for president in 1860, and serving as a general in the Union Army during the Civil War.^{2 3} Below is a photo of Watertown’s first kindergarten.



1873: The First Public Kindergarten in Wisconsin

The first public kindergartens in the state began in 1873 in Manitowoc. The kindergarten was started by Charles Frederic Viebahn, a German-educated principal of the First Ward School. Viebahn was influenced by Fröbel, and was committed to the kindergarten concept. According to a history of Manitowoc and Two Rivers, in a few years “every public school in the city had a kindergarten program for its youngest students and Manitowoc was known in educational circles for the success of its endeavors.”⁴



Kindergartens expanded to many Wisconsin communities in the late 1800's, typically limiting enrollment to 4- and 5-year olds. The photo above is of a Watertown kindergarten in 1895. It appears to include a wide age range, including the very young children in the front row. In 1898 the Wisconsin Legislature passed a law formally permitting school districts to establish 4- and 5-year-old kindergarten, and in 1919 state statutes allowed local taxes to be levied for kindergarten programs.

The Declining Decades: 1920s – 1970s

Even though legislative authority had provided clear authority for school districts to establish 4K programs and levy taxes to cover the costs, the period from 1920 to 1980 marked a waning of the 4K movement that had flourished in the 1800s and peaked in the 1890s. According to DPI records, one-room schools became a thing of the past, and the kindergarten movement had been replaced by a change toward grade level structures and a new focus on higher grade levels, partially in efforts to increase high school attendance.⁵ For a significant part of the twentieth century, the predominant view across the nation was that the best place for most children below school age was with their mothers in their homes.

By 1980, only six districts were offering public 4K.

In 1927, state financial aids were established for 4- and 5-year-old kindergarten, but by 1940, only a handful of districts retained 4K—most of them in Milwaukee and the southeastern part of the state. In 1949 the state legislature passed a bill establishing that 4K students were counted as a 0.5 full-time equivalent pupil for state school aids, providing fiscal support to local school districts. But attitudes about 4K had changed, and in 1957 the legislature repealed 4K aids. By 1980, only six districts were offering public 4K using local funds.⁶

However, from 1940 to 1975 other early care and education programs were emerging outside the

public school system. The nursery school movement in Wisconsin began to grow in the 1970s. Child care surged during World War II, and then began a steady expansion in the 1970s, largely tied to workforce or welfare considerations. Head Start was launched in the 1960s as a compensatory education program to combat poverty. But public 4K didn't begin to re-emerge until the 1980s.

Resurgence and Rapid Expansion: 1980s – 2010

State Aids to 4K Reinstated and Adjusted: 1984 & 1991

The state legislature decided to reinstate state school aid to local school districts for 4K a quarter century after financial support for public 4K had been repealed. The change probably had to do with growing awareness of the importance of early development -- boosted by research on early development, fueled by the Head Start and nursery school movements, and influenced by demands from families who wanted 4K. The 1984 bill also included state school aid for full-day 5-year-old kindergarten, probably in reaction to the growing number of mothers entering the workforce.

A task force on 4K appointed by the DPI Superintendent in 1980 reported that the overriding advantage of reinstating 4K was that early education would be available to all children of all social and economic groups. But it's interesting that the majority of the task force did *not* endorse reinstating 4K, noting several disadvantages, including negative impacts on Head Start and private child care and nursery school programs. But four years later, in 1984, the political decision was made to bring back state 4K funding. However, the report to the Superintendent and the later 1989 Decker Task Force report planted the seeds for the "community approach" to 4K that developed later. The "community approach" emphasized the need for collaboration and coordination between public schools and community-based early care and education programs.

Under the school funding formula adopted in 1984 and adjusted periodically, school districts that decided to offer universal 4K shared the cost with the state, based on a formula that measured each district's ability to cover costs. Children were counted as a 0.5 full-time equivalent in drawing down state equalization aid. In 1991, the legislature added an additional fiscal incentive in the formula for districts to engage in outreach activities with parents and families. Sheboygan Superintendent George Longo and Principal Jeanne Bitkers successfully lobbied DPI and the legislature to help fund outreach to parents of 4K students, with help from communities like Stoughton and Plymouth.

Rapid Growth: 1996-2010

4K expanded at an extraordinary rate beginning in the 1990s. The numbers of school districts offering 4K jumped from 72 to 335 from school year 1996-97 to 2009-2010 (see Figure 2). As of the 2009-10 school year, 80 percent of districts were offering 4K, serving 38,000 students, 53 percent of the 4-year-olds in the state.⁷ Wisconsin was ranked sixth among the states in the percentage of 4-year-olds enrolled in state prekindergarten in a 2009 report by the National Institute of Early Education Research (NIEER).⁸ 4K enrollment doubled between the 2002-03 school year and the 2009-10 school year.

Figure 2

Trends in 4-Year-Old Kindergarten

The number of Wisconsin school districts offering 4-year-old kindergarten, 1996-2010 and
The number of Wisconsin school districts using the Community Approach, 2001-2010

Year	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
Districts	72	85	99	115	138	166	180	189	208	235	257	283	319	335
Community Approaches						3	7	10	19	31	48	58	87	100

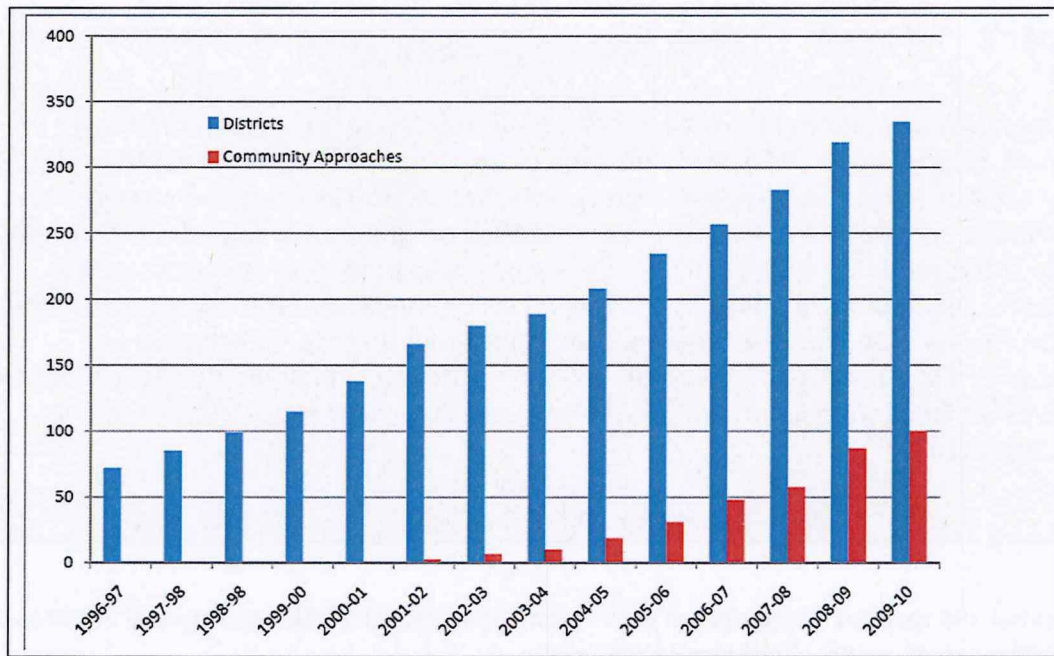


Figure 2 also shows that by 2009-10, 100 districts (30 percent of districts with 4K programs) used “community approaches” to 4K delivery. The community approach to 4K delivery involved collaboration with community-based programs like child care and Head Start.

There were several other influences that drove the expansion of 4K from 1996-2010, including:

- Continued support of parents who wanted 4K in their districts
- Extensive new research on the benefits of preschool and early investment
- Interest in inclusive settings for 4-year-olds with special needs being served by public schools
- School districts seeking additional state funding as enrollments declined

Close Call: 4K Funding Threatened in 2001 and 2003

In two consecutive biennial budgets (2001-2003 and 2003-2005), the Legislature completely cut funding for 4K from the Governor’s budgets. However, in each case, the Governors (first Republican Governor McCallum and then Democratic Governor Doyle) used their veto power to

preserve the policy of providing state school aid for 4K students.

Community Approaches to 4K

In 2001 the La Crosse school district launched an innovative preschool partnership, providing 4K in child care and other community-based centers. Milwaukee Public Schools had earlier sent public school teachers into child care centers. The LaCrosse approach, however, offered three service delivery models for collaboration, and led to several other urban areas to adopt a “community approach,” eventually including Beloit, Eau Claire, Green Bay, Janesville, Kenosha, Oshkosh, Racine, Sheboygan, Stevens Point, and Wausau. Currently, 100 school districts use the community approach to 4K.

Community Approach to 4K

“Community approaches bring together community leaders representing business, schools, child care, Head Start, parents, recreation, and parent education to explore the issues and develop community-based approaches to 4K. They are finding new and innovative approaches that may be school-based or community-based. For example, some communities have 4-year-old kindergartens located in a variety of settings including elementary schools, licensed child care centers, and Head Start programs. One approach has school teachers and support staff providing the 4K program in established community programs. In another approach, the school district contracts with established programs that have DPI-licensed teachers on staff to provide kindergarten.”

- DPI Advisory to school districts, February 2008

Potential and realized advantages of the community approach to 4K were spelled out in a report by the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families:

- Reducing the negative impact on child care providers that may result if new or expanded 4K programs take away a significant part of the market for other preschool programs;
- Creating relationships between private preschool programs and the schools, which can help improve coordination across the education system;
- Bringing additional funding into the early education system, as 4K programs yield additional state and local funding for early education;
- Improving quality, if all the quality factors are put into place, by increasing teacher qualifications and parent involvement, and by reducing pupil-to-staff ratios; and
- Addressing the needs of working families in a more coordinated way.⁹

Many districts that went to a community approach to 4K saw it as a win-win proposition--for the schools, for the early care and education community, and for children and families.

For the first time in this community, almost all agencies affiliated with birth through 8-year-old services have come together at the same table to consolidate efforts, realize joint goals, and plan future initiatives.

-Oshkosh planner for a community approach to 4k, 2005

A large percentage of districts adding 4K programs in the last 10 years used the community approach. They were assisted by 4K coaches made available through the state, planning grants from WCCF in 2004-2006 (financed by the Joyce Foundation), and 4K start-up funding available 2008-2011 from the legislature -- with a strong priority given to districts with community approaches. In some districts, the public schools have become a catalyst for improving early learning and development throughout their community. The 4K coaches have continued to play a significant role in helping school districts plan for successful 4K programs, engaging the community in a collaborative planning effort.

Wisconsin's combination of a strong, stable funding source (the school funding formula) and the impressive attention to building "community approaches" to 4K delivery, combined with its early history, makes it a unique state for pre-kindergarten education.

Quality of Wisconsin 4K

With a system with strong local control, the quality of 4K programs likely varies widely. Wisconsin has taken extensive steps to assure effective educational experiences for 4-year-olds. Wisconsin has developed detailed Model Early Learning Standards as a guide to early care and education practitioners. 4K teachers must have a Bachelor's Degree and an appropriate teacher license with DPI. A significant revision of the approach to continuing education was intended to help teachers improve their skills.

A review of 4K quality by the National Institute for Early Education Research in 2009 found that Wisconsin met 5 of 10 quality standards examined: early learning standards, teacher degree, teacher specialized training, teacher in-service, and monitoring. Each standard had to be met statewide, which is difficult in a system like Wisconsin, where districts traditionally have had significant autonomy. Key quality standards that were not met uniformly statewide included staff-child ratios (standard - 1:10 or better) and qualifications for assistant teachers (standard - Child Development Associate credential or equivalent).

Wisconsin was part of a five-state study of early education programs in 2003-2004 by the National Center for Early Development and Learning. The study showed that Wisconsin 4K students were above the national average on three of the four academic skills assessed. Both poor and non-poor students attending 4K programs in Wisconsin gained language and social skills.¹⁰

Implications for the Future

1. Universal 4K Statewide

Wisconsin is heading toward universal 4K for all children, with over 80% of school districts offering 4K. Public policy should focus on sustaining the gains in 4K, while helping more districts begin 4K programs through coaching, technical assistance, start-up grants, and incentives.

2. Evaluation of 4K in Wisconsin

Wisconsin has had rapid growth of 4K in the last few years, with enrollment doubling since the 2002-03 school year. It is an appropriate time for an independent evaluation of 4K, both school-based and community approaches. An evaluation could look at the quality and effectiveness of 4K programs, assess the impact of community approaches, and identify 4K strengths and weaknesses that districts can learn from.

3. Schools as Leaders in Early Learning

Some schools districts have taken leadership roles in helping to improve the early care and education opportunities throughout their communities. A future direction should be to try to replicate best practices across the state.

4. Quality Control for 4K

School districts in Wisconsin operate with local control over many features of 4K. Concerns have been raised for several years about staff-to-pupil ratios in some districts where the number of children per teacher and group size far exceed child care licensing standards or recommendations from leading early education organizations. Wisconsin should explore requiring more stringent staff-to-pupil requirements or develop incentives for districts to finance better ratios, such as expanding the SAGE program to 4K.

5. School Readiness Data

Wisconsin school districts vary widely in whether and how they assess school readiness when children enter kindergarten or first grade. With the level of state investment in early learning and development, Wisconsin should consider standardizing school readiness assessments statewide. Other states have done this, and they are able to track back to children's preschool experiences statewide.

Clearly Wisconsin has been a national leader in 4K, from its early days to its recent expansion of 4K statewide, with one of the most unique histories in the country. The drafters of the state Constitution and the pioneers that started the nation's first kindergarten would be astounded at where we've come. Mr. Froebel would be proud of the reach of his kindergarten legacy.

Appendix: An Abbreviated History of Kindergarten (4K and 5K) in Wisconsin

1848: Wisconsin Constitution included education for 4-year-olds

1856: First private kindergarten began in Watertown

1873: First public kindergarten opened in Manitowoc, Wisconsin (serves 4- & 5-year olds)

1898: Wisconsin legislature permitted schools to establish 4-year-old kindergarten (4K) and 5-year-old kindergarten (5K)

1919: Legislatures allowed local taxes to be levied for kindergarten

1927: State financial aid established for 4K & 5K

1949: 4K & 5K counted as 1/2 pupil for state aids

1957: Legislature repealed 4K aids

1973: Legislature required districts to provide 5K

1980: DPI Task Force studied 4K

1984: Legislature reinstated 4K aids & allowed 5K aids for full day

1984: Legislation passed to allow school districts to establish, contract for or provide prekindergarten or kindergarten

1989: Decker Task Force recommended statewide plan for comprehensive early education, child care and family services; established local early childhood councils based on school district boundaries; increased roles for schools to involve parents; made changes to existing legislation to promote collaboration; collaboration between schools, child care, Head Start and families; and increased access to higher education programs

1990: 21st Century School Commission - School Readiness Committee made recommendations related to school foundation for early childhood (mandated full day 5K and 1/2 day 4K, mandatory kindergarten attendance, Head Start expansion); education market plan; interagency coordination (commission on children and families and state department cooperation); established community foundation for early childhood systems (councils, schools role in assisting with community based services); foundations for student success (ungraded primary units, reduce adult/child ratios, incentive grant, communication, promote understanding of diversity); interrelation of social and educational policies (food programs, child/family policies, education health partnership); parent education (access, resource centers, school-parent communication, family leave, parent conferences); and required community service credit for high school students

1991: State Budget Bill created Student Readiness Study Committee that made recommendations on central point of access for parents, community needs assessments, schools role in readiness, partnerships with parents, state-agency leadership and assistance to communities

1991: Legislature allowed 4K 20% time outreach to parents

1992: Governor's Commission on Families and Children collaboration subcommittee recommended collaboration among agencies and programs at the state and local level

1994: First of three early childhood summits brought state departments and related associations to the table. These meetings led to the development of early childhood care and education guiding principals and the creation of the Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners (WECCP)

1995: Joint Legislative Council established Special Committee on Child Care Economics that proposed legislation including establishing local early childhood council grant program; authorization for school boards to lease space, contract for, or provide prekindergarten or kindergarten; and state transportation aid to transport children from school to child care

2001: Legislature addressed proposal to increase 4K aid to full day. The final vote reduced funding for districts operating 4K programs. Former Republican Governor McCallum vetoed these provisions.

2001: WECCP report identified opportunities for government action including development of common vision, mechanisms for communication, promoting quality standards, developing data systems, and addressing professional development

2002: National Governors Association Grant to Build Public and Political Will for Early Childhood Care and Education addressed and made recommendations related to collaboration, improving access and quality, developing a state level infrastructure, promoting a seamless system of services for children birth to age eight, improving professional development, generating public awareness, supporting community service delivery, and ensuring sufficient funding

2002: WECCP developed proposal for children's agenda

2003: The Pew Charitable Trusts funded planning grants to promote 4K and community approaches

2003: Legislature again voted to cut funding for districts operating 4K programs. Current Democratic Governor Doyle vetoed these provisions

2004: The Pew Charitable Trusts funded implementation grants to promote 4K and community approaches

2007: Legislature passed \$3 million in start-up grants for 4K, with priority for collaborative approaches

2009: Legislature continued 4K start-up grants: \$3 million in year one of budget, and \$1.5 million in year two

2009: Governor signed bill mandating kindergarten in Wisconsin

Source: Jill Haglund, DPI (minor additions)

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- ¹ 1848 State Constitution, from Wisconsin Historical Digital Collection,
http://content.wisconsinhistory.org/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/tp&CISOPTR=71796&CISO_SHOW=71777
- ² Watertown Historical Society.
<http://www.watertownhistory.org/Articles/KindergardenFirst.htm>
- ³ Source of photo: Jill Haglund, Department of Public Instruction
- ⁴ Wisconsin Hometown Stories, *Manitowoc-Two Rivers: A History*.
<http://www.wisconsinstories.org/manitowoc/essay/index.cfm?page=3>
- ⁵ DPI PowerPoint by Jill Haglund, *Four-Year-Old Kindergarten in Wisconsin*, 2009.
- ⁶ *Report to State Superintendent Barbara Thompson on the Four-Year-Old Kindergarten*, special ad hoc task force, June 9, 1980
- ⁷ DPI website: <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/fscp/pdf/ec4yktrend-to2010.pdf> The 53 percent figure was calculated by dividing numbers served in 2009-10 (38,000) by the most recent data on 4-year-olds in Wisconsin (71,519)
- ⁸ National Institute for Early Education Research (2009) *The State of Preschool 2009: State Preschool Yearbook*
<http://nieer.org/yearbook/pdf/yearbook.pdf>
- ⁹ Wisconsin Council on Children and Families (2006) *Early Education Matters*:
<http://www.wccf.org/pdf/eemlessonslearned.pdf>
- ¹⁰ **DPI website:** <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/fscp/pdf/ec-impact-dev.pdf>



February 6, 2024

Senate Committee on Education

Department of Public Instruction Testimony 2023 Senate Bill 973

Thank you, Chairman Jagler, and members of the committee, for the opportunity to testify in opposition to Senate Bill 973 (SB 973).

The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) supports the authors' intent of increasing access to early childhood education through partnerships between schools and child care providers. The department is opposing SB 973 because it does not solve the biggest problem facing schools and providers: a desperate need for additional state resources. Instead, this proposal distorts an innovative, mostly successful approach to early childhood – the four-year-old kindergarten community approach (4KCA) – to divert resources from schools to child care providers.

Wisconsin has a deep history and connection to early childhood. We are home to the first private kindergarten (1856 in Watertown) in our nation, and one of the first public kindergartens (1873 in Manitowoc). That history springs from our constitutional guarantee in Article X, Section 3, that a free education be provided to "all children between the ages of 4 and 20 years." The 4KCA, which this bill seeks to formally define, was started by public schools and private childcares around 2000, during a period of rapid growth of 4K programming.

The 4KCA seen across Wisconsin is modeled on the program run by the School District of La Crosse, which used multiple service delivery models including providing education services with teachers integrated into private child care settings. This approach was championed by the Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners (WECCP), a group of early childhood advocates that included child care providers and advocates, public school educators, and stakeholders. Then and for years since, the Department of Public Instruction has supported and promoted 4KCA as a local option. The strength of the model is its ability to provide direct instruction and wrap-around care within the same setting, allowing for a seamless experience for learners and families.

SB 973 attempts to address a challenge some early child care providers face – negotiating an acceptable contract with a local district – by legislating a funding scheme and removing several requirements school districts must follow when administering education. Most critically, this bill does not increase state spending. This means the result of this proposal is a redistribution of resources across the state, as well as a property tax increase to support private 4K child care businesses.

From a technical standpoint, this bill does not address several issues that are of great concern to the department. 4KCA programs, alongside traditional 4K public school programs, provide a link between birth-to-three services and regular school environments for students experiencing a disability. Schools are required to serve learners experiencing a disability, whereas private child care providers are not. There is an identified shortage of care for children experiencing a disability, as articulated throughout the Department of Children and Family's 2022 Preschool Development Grant Needs Assessment. The department is concerned the legislation may result in a disruption of service for kids experiencing a disability.

Schools receive revenue authority based on a three-year rolling average. In practice, that means a learner entering 4K only counts for one-third of their eventual revenue authority. The resulting calculation of revenue for an individual 4K learner appears to be significantly lower than many 4KCA contracts in place. If the bill authors intend to require districts to provide full revenue authority, then districts will be required to divert resources for learners who remain in the public school system to cover this loss. This concern is exacerbated by the bill's intent to take effect in the 2024-25 school year.

Finally, the legislature and DPI made a commitment to advancing early reading efforts which this proposal would erode. Educators exempted from licensing under this bill would not be subject to the Foundations of Reading Test (FORT) or the training requirement spelled out in 2023 Act 20. Furthermore, if a district elects to use high-quality instructional materials, this proposal allows the provider to select a separate set of materials. The bill also does not address how early interventions would be handled for a learner identified by the 4K screener provided to all public school students.

The examples above represent a small sample of the concerns the department has with the proposal as drafted. The department believes that with additional time and stakeholder work between schools and child care providers, a reasonable solution can be found that includes additional investments. DPI remains committed to working with DCF and the child-care community to pursue ways we can work together toward that shared objective.

If you have questions or want additional information, please contact Kevyn Radcliffe, Legislative Liaison, at kevyn.radcliffe@dpi.wi.gov or (608) 264-6716.

Hello,

My name is Corrine Hendrickson, and I am testifying on behalf of myself as the owner of Corrine's Little Explorers Family Child Care Program in New Glarus, in Support of the 4k bill. AB1036/SB973 the 4k bill. I support this bill because it will pro-actively align us with changes and funding coming from the Federal government that will require "mixed delivery," what we call Community Collaboration, and what most other states are doing to promote every child having access to high quality preschool without impeding access to working parents for the care and education of all children between 6 weeks and 12 years. Neither the federal government or an overwhelming majority of states require a "teaching license," to be eligible to teach as we have to pass annual name based background checks, and FBI fingerprints every 5 years (unlike schools) continuing education requirements that keep us current for developmentally appropriate practices and environments along with mentors, licensors, Youngstar or accreditation consultants, etc. that are constantly coaching us for improvements in our programs, unlike schools who don't have those same supports, therefore, it is beneficial to require them to have a teaching license.

The DPI has an entire website devoted to 4k community collaboration. This website includes a 54 benefits to children, families, children with special needs, and communities and another with quotes, videos, and testimonials from school districts about how collaboration has benefitted their communities. However, even with these recommendations programs that are qualified are not being allowed to collaborate. For example, under current rules I could get my DPI license back and be qualified to community collaborate with my home district. 3 of the 5 licensed programs presented our interest to do so starting in the 24/25 school year when it is likely that the school district will go to all day 4k as they are building a new elementary school and "piloted" one full day classroom. We spoke about how if they don't collaborate with us, our capacity will go down, and that we can't just fill those empty rooms with other children because when there isn't any school (12 weeks in the summer and at least 20 days scattered throughout the school year and a few early releases) those children will need care. Personally, I will have to go down to 6 children due to accreditation standards for children 3 and under, or, Youngstar Quality rating standards to maintain my 5 star will be unachievable. Furthermore, after 16 years of experience, I know that I will be unable to meet the needs of the children and will quickly burn out and close if I had 7 or 8 children 3 and under. I will then need to raise my rates about \$60 a week per child to offset this revenue loss. If this bill passes, then we would be able to collaborate, keep our current capacity, and continue to meet the needs of working families in our district and stabilize tuition.

Also, with the significant teacher shortage both in child care and in k-12 schools, this bill will reduce the number of teachers necessary. Currently, a child that has working parents has 2 teachers for the 2 locations instead of just 1 if they stayed in their child care program.

This change to required will also reduce costs to property taxpayers in districts that are choosing to do full day 4k to meet the child care needs of their community are only receiving .5 or .6 full time equivalent funding. This leaves children in school districts that don't have the ability to raise property taxes without care for the remainder of the day when there isn't wrap around care for those parents to access for work. This impacts employers in the community negatively. Typically, the districts going to all day are the ones without child care in the community and they have 4 year olds open enrolling to school districts with child care available so they are providing all day 4k to meet those parents needs and keep them in the district.

Currently, children across the state that are 4k eligible are not opting in to 4k in the public school for a variety of reasons, they are addressed in the 54 benefits I have attached, and opting to stay in their child care programs to receive that education. These children are receiving the education, but not being "counted" giving us inaccurate data. Changing to required, along with the other changes in the bill, will ensure that parents can make the best choice for their child and their needs. This will improve relationships between schools and child care programs for continuity of care as children start with us, go to school for the 180ish days, and come back to us before, after, and on non-school days. Children with special needs are more likely to be identified and receive supports in communities that collaborate as the child care program knows who to talk to at the school to start the process and therapy, as it is already supposed to be, will be provided at the child care. The child care then can continue to support the child using the therapies that they observe and can then communicate those supports to the parents. This provides consistency and, in turn, increases the child's ability to meet the IEP goals. I have had over a dozen children with IEP's over the years, and the ones that had therapy within my program obtained their IEP goals at a better rate than those who were pulled out and taken to the school for therapy.

In conclusion, there are several reasons in addition to those above to support the changes to 4k community collaboration in this bill, but the most important reasons are for the children in our communities. They deserve continuity of care, a program that fits their developmental needs, and environments that cultivate curiosity, creativity, collaboration, a love of learning, and that sets them up for success of their parents choosing.

My name is Tricia Peterson, I am the owner of Future All*Star's Academy, LLC (FASA), an Early Care and Education facility in Dodge County. I am writing to you in support of Senate Bill #973.

My center has been in operation for the last 11 years. In those 11 years we have cared for over 100s of children/families. In our school district we are the only licensed facility, and the school district does not currently offer a collaborative approach for 4k. They house all 4k within district. When Our district started their 4k, all day program, we lost 48% of our budget and had no choice, but to increase our rates.

We are licensed for 48 children at our facility. We currently are caring for children in 8 different school districts. The childcare crisis is real, and families are driving many extra miles to have care, so they as parents, can work.

This bill would help benefit many of our families in so many ways. A few of them are:

1. It is nice to drop off and pick up all your children in 1 location.
2. Parents feel less stressed when they don't have to worry or figure out before and after school care along with school out days
3. In our district, our school offers their own unregulated care. Therefore, they do not accept county assistance. This would help those families to not have to figure out how to come up with the money to pay for another invoice.
4. Parents are their children's best educators, and they know what is best for them and where their children will be successful, this gives parents options.
5. Affordable childcare is non-existent as we have very thin margins – having a 4k collaboration, this will help families with the cost of care. Now families would only be paying extra for before and after school care.
6. Continue the continuity of care (90% of our families start in our infant room)

As a quality early care and education center we have teachers who are qualified to take on this opportunity. We have teachers with bachelor's degrees and associate degrees. We encourage staff to participate in the TEACH program to pursue degrees. Degreed staff are important to have as they help lay the foundation for education and discovery, alongside the parents for the early stages in the child's life. These skills they will continue to use throughout their education journey. Communication Skills, Problem Solving Skills, and providing experiences to build your child's knowledge are only a few we focus on at our center. Our staff continue to learn and build their knowledge of the learning ways in our profession through our yearly required professional development. This year we will continue to focus on Pyramid Model and to use our professional development hours for learning more about trauma.

We pride ourselves on the relationships we build with not only the children but also the families. We meet all the children and families where they are at. The foundation of each child's education journey comes from a balance between our center and home life. Our goal for every child, who enters through our doors, will experience growth that will be guided by developmentally appropriate activities according to his/her learning ability and interest through our Pyramid Model work.

Teachers in our center, are behind the planning and implanting of each child's success – by their observations, screeners – at our center we use Ages and Stages ASQ both 3 & SE, High scope

Assessments, child goal setting which guide their lesson plans and ongoing documentation for their individual portfolios. And at times we even must add writing behavior plans for children who need to be re-taught specific skills to make them successful. This could be as easy as an individualized schedule or even a social story to help the child better understand their expectations. With daily communication from both in- person and the use of our app, parents are constantly informed as to what where their child is developing. We also offer parent-teacher conferences twice a year.

Our curriculum is based on High Scope, Wisconsin Early Model Learning Standards (WEMELS) and the foundation of Pyramid Model. We are blessed to be a Center Wide Pyramid Model Learning Center, thanks to the financial support of The Watertown Community Health Foundation. This framework is what brought Quality to our center!!

At the end of the day, we truly want what is best for ALL children and Bill 973 supports that. Not all families will pick us, but it is their choice and families know the right fit for their own child.

Thank you for this opportunity, it has been a pleasure to work alongside Representative Goeben, along with my colleagues to help guide this bill.

Linda Kudrna 2/6/2024
Learning Ladder Preschool & Childcare
Cottage Grove, WI. 53527
608-839-5437

Testimony in support of SB 973-4K Community Approach to four-year-old kindergarten

Dear Senate Education Committee,

I am the owner of Learning Ladder Preschool & Childcare in Cottage Grove. We are 5-star Youngstar rated and have been successfully operating for over 30 years. I am here today because I assisted Rep Goeben in writing the bill. This 4K Community Collaboration or "mixed delivery" system **IS** the best option for Wisconsin families. My hope is you will see the benefits of the modifications we have made and vote in favor of this bill. It is important to note this bill aligns with the anticipated Federal level bills that will soon require, instead of recommending school districts to participate, in a mixed delivery of 4K. Several other states have already successfully implemented this public funded preschool programming model.

My program participated in the Monona Grove School District's 4K community collaboration for 12 years. The District Superintendent often spoke highly of our program and pledged we would always be a part of it. After building a new elementary school in 2021, they removed the participating childcare programs in our community from the collaboration without notification. That first year my enrolled families with 4-year-olds stayed with us in our in-house 4K program but our 4-year-old enrollment has steadily declined each year since. The increase in tuition has made it unaffordable for many families to stay even though they would prefer to attend 4K in our program. Most of these children have been attending our program since they were infants so leaving is a difficult decision for them.

We cannot compete with the school districts "Free" 4K programming. This disrupts the community infrastructure and is a common story throughout the state.

Currently, according to reports, only 28% of school districts offer a community approach and the number is quickly decreasing. At the same time, losing our 4-year-olds to the district has been our biggest financial hurdle. Our 4-year-old classroom once accounted for 25% of our total revenue. As you can imagine, such a large loss of revenue would cause great stress to any business, even more so in the childcare industry where profit margins have always been extremely low. Child Care Counts has kept us operating but we all know it is ending soon.

A well-funded and fair Community Approach avoids disruptions to children and families and better facilitates a quality birth-five system of early care and learning. It keeps tuition costs down and early learning programs open for business to serve the needs of children from 6 week-12 years in the community.

This bill ensures the funding, child/teacher ratio's, curriculum, and teacher qualifications are consistent and stable for our programs and for families.

Oversite and training at childcare programs are comprehensive. We adhere to more health and safety regulations than public schools. We report to DCF, most programs are accredited and meet another higher set of standards. We have classroom cameras. Staff are required to be fingerprinted and submit annual background checks. There are annual continuing ed requirements. We are trained in CPR, first aid, Head Trauma, Abuse & Neglect and many early care topics. Parents rely on us for advice and colleges rely on us to send their students for their work-studies and practicums. We are much more than a babysitting service.

There are many additional benefits to a 4K community approach. Please refer to the 54 reasons Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction listed online https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/early-childhood/4kca/pdf/54_benefits_4kca_list.pdf

This bill was written with the intent to strengthen our community infrastructure, provide families with stable, affordable, and consistent childcare options, and build bridges with our local school districts.

Please consider voting for SB 973.

Thank you.

SB 973 Approach to four-year-old Kindergarten
MOCK CONTRACT/AGREEMENT FOR 4K KINDERGARTEN HOUSED IN A COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAM
1/2024

This agreement (Means written document that defines roles and responsibilities of the school board and the community based provider related to the operations of the school boards four-year-old Kindergarten Program) is between _____ (Community-based provider) (hereinafter "Provider) and the _____ (School District) (hereinafter "acronym of school district"), (collectively hereinafter "Parties"). It is agreed as follows.

1.LOCATION/FACILITIES

1. The facilities at which the services are to be provided pursuant to the Agreement are located at (insert address). (hereinafter the "Site).
2. The Provider will be solely responsible for maintaining an appropriate environment for four-year-olds including, but not limited to:
 - a. Indoor play space and equipment appropriate for early childhood.
 - b. Outdoor space and equipment appropriate for early childhood.
 - c. Space for support services and parents.
 - d. Space, which complies with the first amendment to the United States Constitution regarding separation of church and state and public education facilities for young children.

2. OPERATIONS

- A. Provider shall provide program space, a teacher's assistant, and a qualified lead teacher (as stated in bill) for four-year-old (4K) Kindergarten Program shall be provided in accordance with the requirements of this Agreement (hereinafter Program Services).
- B. *The Four-Year-Old Kindergarten Program Services shall include minimum student contact time of 437 hours per full school year.*
- C. The Four-Year-Old Kindergarten Program will include an outreach program (e.g. home visits, training, team planning, and parent outreach, etc.) of 87.5 hours per year.
- D. Four-Year-Old Kindergarten shall be delivered for at least 2.5 consecutive hours per day.
- E. The Four-Year-Old Kindergarten Program shall begin in September and be completed in May.
- F. Daily attendance records will be maintained by the provider in accordance with state requirements.

3. STAFF/ENROLLMENT

- A. The provider will designate an on-site Early Learning Coordinator who will be the contact person who oversees the four-year-old program.
- B. (a) Notwithstanding ss.118.19 (1) and 121.02 (1) (a), a teacher who teaches a in a four-year-old kindergarten program offered at a community-based provider under this agreement is not required to hold a certificate, license, or permit to teach issued by the department.

(b) Except as provided in par.(c) a teacher who teaches in a four-year-old kindergarten program offered at a community -based site under a contract or agreement shall have a bachelor's degree, including a master's or doctorate, from a nationally or regionally accredited institution of higher education.

SB 973 Approach to four-year-old Kindergarten
MOCK CONTRACT/AGREEMENT FOR 4K KINDERGARTEN HOUSED IN A COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAM
1/2024

(c) A teacher may teach in a four-year-old kindergarten program offered at a community-based site under a contract or agreement if the teacher has an associate degree in early childhood education and all the following apply:

1) The teacher is enrolled at or will be enrolled at by no later than 12 months after the teacher begins teaching in the four-year-old kindergarten program, a nationally or regionally accredited institution of higher education for the purpose of obtaining a bachelor's degree.

2) The teacher intends to obtain a bachelor's degree by no later than 4 years after the teacher begins teaching in the four-year-old program.

- C. An Educational Assistant to a 4-year-old group must meet the DCF educational requirement for an Assistant teacher.
- D. The maximum staff-child ratio will be 24 students to one teacher and one educational assistant for a ratio of (18-2).
- E. The maximum enrollment for one teacher will be 13 students for a ratio of (13-1).

4. CURRICULUM/ASSESSMENTS

- A. Curriculum will meet the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards.
- B. Students will be assessed by a 4K assessment using common tools based on curriculum guidelines/goals.
- C. Integrated services for children with special needs when/if able to accommodate.
- D. Provider shall comply with all applicable provisions of State and Federal law governing pupil records and shall, in any event, maintain the confidentiality of all personal information to students and their families.
- E. Notwithstanding s. 121.54, a school district is not required to provide transportation to pupils enrolled in a school district who attend a four-year-old kindergarten program offered at a community-based provider under a contract or agreement.
- F. Community providers will adhere to their own bussing policy.

5. FUNDING

- A. The contracted per pupil payment amount will be set at 95% of the per pupil revenue limit.
- B. A quarterly payment schedule is required
- C. No enrollment fees may be required of a parent/family to enroll their child for the 4K program provided, however student fees may be charged for supplies or food.
- D. Childcare is an option for enrolled participants but not required. Provisions of childcare services and collection of all childcare tuition and fees shall be the sole responsibility of the provider.

6. PARENT INVOLVMENT

- A. Direct services to families, legal guardians, or primary caregiver in the form of parental education and parent child activities may occur.
- B. Parent/Teacher conferences to be held at least 2 times each school year.
- C. Activities may include orientation activities, general communication, family fun nights, potluck dinner meetings, offering childcare during parenting classes, classroom involvement training,

SB 973 Approach to four-year-old Kindergarten
MOCK CONTRACT/AGREEMENT FOR 4K KINDERGARTEN HOUSED IN A COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAM
1/2024

family resource lending library, interface with other care/education providers, intergenerational component, special events, transition to 5K, and/or parent newsletters.

- D. If a Provider utilizes parent or other volunteers, Provider shall conduct appropriate background checks and screening which comply with DCF/DPI policies.

7. SUPPORT SERVICES

The school district will provide support services on an as-needed basis, to the extent that it is the district's discretion, such staff and/or resources available.

8. STANDARDS/PROGRAM EVALUATION

The following, among legal and program standards apply to the provider in the 4K program:

- A. The statutes set forth by SB 973
- B. DCF Rules and Regulations, and site visits
- C. Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards
- D. The provider must remain in good standings with its licensing authority.

9. TERM

- A. This agreement shall be for the 2024-2025 school year. This agreement shall terminate at the conclusion of each school year, or it can be renewed in writing by both parties

10. MISCELLANEOUS

- A. The parties agree the Provider is and remains an independent contractor and is not engaging in a partnership or joint venture of any kind under this agreement.

School District Representative Signature

Community Based Provider Signature

Date

Dear Senate Education Committee.

My name is Joan Beck, and I am writing to you in support of Senate Bill #973.

I have been the administrator of Willows Christian Child Care in rural Iron Ridge, Dodge County since 1993. During those years we have built and expanded the building in which Willows resides. My goal in starting Willows was to provide High Quality childcare to rural Dodge County. We are currently a 5-star program and NAC accredited. I personally have gone from entry level childcare course to completing a Bachelor's degree in Business in 2004. My current staff includes 1 Teacher with a Bachelor's in Early Education, 3 Teachers with Associate Degrees, 1 of which is completing a Bachelor's degree. I also have 2 Teachers completing their Associate Degree in Early Education this year. Many of these degrees are thanks to the TEACH scholarship my staff was able to access. I have seen the quality of a childcare program increase with the completion of degrees by the Teachers in the program. It creates a ripple effect that encompasses all aspects of a program. A positive result for the children of Wisconsin.

In this bill the end goal is for all 4-K Teachers to have a bachelor's degree, which access to the TEACH scholarship program makes it attainable. The same education level as the public school Teachers. The days of childcare workers being considered glorified baby-sitters is gone. Thanks to the funding earmarked for TEACH scholarships.

As you can see Willows goal is quality education for the children we care for, and yes education begins at birth with parents always being the strongest educator and we in early care and education supporting them. I have been working with Rep Born for three years concerning the need for a community approach to 4-K in Wisconsin. On the Federal level it is often referred to as the Mixed Delivery System, and in this bill is called the Community Approach to 4-K. When I started talking to Rep Goeben it all came together. This bill is the result of myself and other childcare providers working with Rep. Goeben.

For me the battle with 4-K started 22 years ago when DPI implemented 4-K in the public schools. The public school was not interested in a collaboration with me, they wanted all the income from these 4-year-olds. My income dropped 25% because of this decision. As an independent business owner this was a huge hit. Economically it forced me to charge the young working families in my area higher rates for the childcare they received. This bill gives me the chance to even the playing field and be part of the DPI funding for 4-year-olds.

We in Childcare have oversight by DCF Licensing along with YoungStar. Because of DCF regulations early care and education Teachers are required to complete a minimum of 15 hours of continuing ed a year. Through NAC Accreditation my staff is required to complete a total of 25 hours of continuing education. DPI Teacher have the oversight of their local school board. And are not required to complete any continuing education. This surprises me because of the changing needs of the children we care for, along with the ongoing information regarding best practices for teaching children. A 4-K teacher in a community approach program would not require a DPI teaching License because we are teaching children birth through 5-year-olds. DPI teachers are working with 4-K through 12th grade. A definite difference, plus no continuing education is required to maintain that license, which raises questions as to the quality of a teacher with a lifetime DPI License.

The funding attached to this bill, 95% of the per pupil revenue, will help stabilize childcare across the state. The public schools will retain 5% of these funds for their administration costs. The school district's administration duties are very minimal as compared to a collaboration approach to 4-K, which currently is the only community involvement childcare programs have with 4-K.

Under this bill the childcare program would be responsible for overseeing the entire 4-K program, from providing the space to hiring the Teacher. Our curriculum would continue to be based on the Wisconsin Early Model Learning Standards (WEMELS). This is the DPI description of WEMELS: "The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards have been developed by the Wisconsin state departments of Public Instruction, Children and Families, and Health Services. They reflect shared values and commitments of the citizens of Wisconsin to prepare young children for success in school." As you can see WEMELS is considered the base for all curriculum used for educating children. Whichever curriculum a childcare program decides to use for its curriculum and assessments, WEMELS needs to be at the core. And believe me there are as many early education curriculums available as there are colors of socks.

Attached you will find the "The state of Preschool, Nieer report for 2022" (NIEER is the National Institute for Early Education Research) On page 161 is Wisconsin's Quality Standards Checklist, it states Wisconsin met 3 out of the 10. My program would meet all 10 of the requirements because of DCF licensing regulations, YoungStar requirement and NAC accreditation criteria. Just by doing what I and other 5-star programs do.

In closing I want to ask you to consider what is best for the children and families of Wisconsin. Is letting these families choose which DPI funded 4-K option they want a privilege or their right? I have always been proud of the fact that Wisconsin families have the choice of where they want to have their children educated, please be part of continuing this expansion.

Thank you for your attention to this bill.

Joan Beck, Administrator
Willows Christian Child Care Center
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Iron Ridge, WI 53035
262 224 5025



Wisconsin Early
Childhood Association

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Fitchburg, WI 53719
Ph: 800-783-9322 | Fax: 877-248-7622
www.wisconsinearlychildhood.org

To: Members, Senate Committee on Education
From: Wisconsin Early Childhood Association
Date: February 5, 2024
RE: Testimony on Senate Bill 973

Chairman Jagler, Vice Chair Quinn, and members of the Senate Committee on Education, my name is Paula Drew. I am here today providing testimony on behalf of Wisconsin Early Childhood Association, a state nonprofit founded in 1971 that serves nearly 90 percent of early childhood educators who work in regulated child care programs across Wisconsin. I serve as co-director of WECA's shared services network. WECA appears today to testify in support of Senate Bill 973. We are encouraged by what this bill on community-based 4K acknowledges – that the way child care is funded is flawed and requires a significant state investment. However, we believe there are ways to address equity in 4K programming without pitting public schools against local child care providers. WECA hopes this bill prompts further discussions and urges the committee to not rush through this bill at the end of a legislative session.

Child care operates in a failed market because it is supported nearly exclusively by the fees of parents, which makes it incredibly difficult to compensate early educators, strains families, and creates broad economic ripple effects as a result. While equitable funding for 4K community child care is an important piece, it is not the “silver bullet” to solve the current child care crisis. Above all, there must be an ongoing state investment to stabilize the child care infrastructure in Wisconsin. This can be done and is necessary to ensure there is still child care available in Wisconsin.

Regarding SB 973, we are encouraged to see in this bill that early education is considered a public good alongside the K-12 system. With that said, we feel that this bill pits institutions of education and educators of all backgrounds, from those who serve infants through 12th graders, against each other for funding sources without adding needed state revenue into the sector. We'd like to note that Wisconsin's per-pupil funding for 4K is ranked 38th out of 45 publicly funded programs showing a need for further per-pupil investment. It is an especially unhelpful strategy when we consider it misses the guiding principle we should have in mind – that is, investing in children from birth through grade 12 should be viewed as a public good worthy of state investment.

WECA has long been advocating for improvements in the implementation of 4K programming and has noted research connected to the detrimental effects on the early care and education sector. As the state considers ways to improve education for some of our youngest children, we encourage policymakers and agency officials to consider bigger system changes. For example, there are many other state models that provide more equitable 4K options without driving division. For example, states like New Mexico and Colorado, have developed a system that exemplify parent choice, equitable distribution of seats, and adequate funding. Wisconsin currently serves roughly 61% of 4-year-olds in publicly funded 4K, ranking us 7th out of 45 in access, which is certainly something to be proud of. As the state moves to improve this model, WECA looks forward to being part of even deeper discussions on how we can collaborate to make this work most effectively for children, communities, and all educational programs in Wisconsin.

Thank you for your time and I'd be happy to answer any questions.

LRB-5595/1 Community Approach to 4 year-old kindergarten.

Hello,

I am writing this testimony in support of the Community Approach to 4 year-old kindergarten. I have been the owner of a group child care program for the past 11 years. Not only is the Community Approach recommended by DPI, DCF, and the Federal Office of Child Care, but it is also what is considered best practices in the academia and medical fields.

My experience working in a school district that purposefully and unilaterally declined to participate in the community approach has been a good example of the harm it causes. 4-year old children that have been with our program since babies are now being bused from our program to the public school building for 3 hours a day and then bused back again. Many times, they do not get outside to play in the morning due to the school's programming limits, and the logistics of trying to get 15, 4-year olds dressed and ready to go outside and then again to get them undressed (winter is especially time consuming). They will return here at lunch time, eat and then need to be offered the state required rest time. Therefore, sometimes the children do not get outside until mid afternoon. This scenario is not good for child development. Nor is it fun for parents and ECE teachers trying to coax crying children to go to "the big school," and telling them that they will be back soon. This practice also exacerbates a negative experience on children with disabilities and special needs. Transitions can be very difficult for children with special needs. I have experience of our school district picking up a child for 1 hour for therapy at the school (which is 2 blocks away) and then returning the child. This is most certainly not best practice for the child. There is a reason why the term Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) is such an important aspect of a child's IEP (individual education program). This term refers to where the child spends the majority of time, and that is the place the child should stay to receive services, because that is the most effective way to deliver those services.

To further advance the importance of the Community Approach is play based learning is what is necessary/best for children at this age.

<https://www.usnews.com/education/k12/articles/play-based-learning-vs-academics-in-preschool>

For those that have concerns about the qualification of the ECE teacher the following report from 2020 addresses those concerns;

"On average, teachers in our sample had been working in ECE for 10 years. The vast majority of teachers (82.7%) had some college education or a college degree; more than one-quarter (27.3%) had a bachelor's or post-graduate degree. About one in five teachers was currently enrolled in a degree program, and those who had not yet earned an associate degree were most likely to be currently enrolled. Teachers reported high levels of engagement in professional development opportunities; nearly three quarters had participated in some type of PD during the past 12 months. With respect to PD content areas, most teachers reported having participated in PD related to supporting children's social and emotional needs while most teachers reported needing more PD on supporting dual language learners and caring for children with special needs. Nearly one in four (23.4%) teachers reported having worked with a YoungStar Technical Consultant, but fewer (13.0%) had engaged in practice-based coaching in the past 12 months. With respect to the T.E.A.C.H. scholarship program and REWARD stipend program, participation rates were similar across the two programs (14.2% to 19.9%, respectively), but

teachers who had not participated in the program were more likely to be familiar with the T.E.A.C.H. program than with the REWARD program. We also found that teachers' experience, education, and PD varied significantly by teacher role and YoungStar rating, but found few differences by region. Lead teachers had twice as many years of experience (12 years), on average, compared to assistant and float/substitute teachers (6-7 years) and had higher levels of education, meaning they were more likely to have an associate or bachelor's degree. However, assistant and float/substitute teachers were more likely to be currently enrolled in a degree program, suggesting many are working on attaining a degree. Across multiple types of PD and training opportunities, participation in professional development activities was generally higher among lead teachers compared to assistant and float/substitute teachers.

That said, key findings from the 2020 Wisconsin Early Care and Education Workforce Reports include: • A highly educated and experienced ECE workforce. Nearly 83 percent of surveyed teachers have some college education or college degree, and more than 27 percent have a bachelor's or post-graduate degree. ECE professionals also are highly experienced – teachers surveyed have been working in the field for an average of 10 years.”

The question is why would we not provide the mixed delivery (Community Approach) to 4K? Why would our state not ensure that families are provided the options of taking their young child to a program that works best for their child and their family situation. When school districts like mine decide not to allow the community approach they are removing a parent's options and rights within that community.

The only reason there would be opposition to it is the potential decrease in funding to the public school district. Is this a reason not to do the right thing? Which begs the question which is more important: money or children's well-being?

Short video on mixed delivery;

[The Right Direction: Mixed Delivery Early Care and Education](#)

Kindly,
Brooke Legler
608-220-8236

Traci A. Graham

1186 Bond St.

Green Bay, WI 54303

Phone: 920-660-8955

Email: tracgrah@hssdschools.org

February 5th, 2024

To Whom it May Concern:

My name is Traci Graham and I am currently a 4K Regular Education Lead Teacher at The Shepherd's Preschool in Green Bay, WI. The Shepherd's Preschool is a 4K partner site within the Howard-Suamico School District. I am writing in support of the Assembly Bill AB1035 which would have changed the dynamic of my initial hiring process for my current 4K position.

In November of 2023, when I applied for a regular education 4K Lead teacher position, I was under the assumption that my educational background as well as past teaching experience was beyond the qualifications needed to fulfill the position. My educational background consists of a double Bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point for Regular Education and Special Education K-8 in December 2011. I then went on to complete my Master's in Applied Leadership and Teaching from the University of Wisconsin Green Bay in May 2016. During this time, I taught K-5 special education in the Green Bay Area Public School District. I continued my education with an Autism Certificate from Fox Valley Technical College in 2017. I transitioned to the Howard Suamico School District from 2018-2023. During this time I taught K-4 special education. I also received a Teacher of Distinction in 2021 for my commitment and contribution to the education of my elementary students.

As I transitioned into my current 4K position, I was halted as I was told that I was not qualified with my educational background which did not meet criteria nor did the 11.5 years of elementary teaching experience meet qualifications for this position. After going through multiple conversations with what I needed to do to meet criteria and the joy of a new career choice slowly fading, I began questioning if the "hoops" were ever going to stop. From being told initially that I needed a 2.5 year course and portfolio, more child development courses, then applying for one course to extend my regular education license to now registering for the Praxis 2, I am still in awe that I am underqualified in the middle of a teacher shortage and am on an emergency license until I pass the Praxis 2. The Praxis 2 is a three hour, 180 question exam that as I study the material would effectively prepare me for high school, but does not pertain to my 4K curriculum or criteria that my students need.

Passing this Assembly Bill AB1035 would eliminate many of these inappropriate "hoops" and perhaps open the door to future educators looking to further their educational experience.

Thank you for your time-

Traci A. Graham



The Green County Child Care Network supports the proposed bill requiring community collaboration for all interested and eligible licensed child care programs known as the **4k bill AB1035/SB973**.

We support the bill as it ensures that working parents can choose the preschool program that best fits their needs to continue working and their child to access publicly funded preschool. Currently, Monroe school district collaborates with some of the licensed child care programs in Monroe, Albany will allow interested and eligible programs to community collaborate. The rest of the school districts currently do not offer community collaboration. This bill will also help build bridges and relationships between schools and licensed child care programs in their district to collaborate and support the diverse needs of the students enrolled in both programs. Child Care programs care for and educate children from 6 weeks-12 years and provide care for the approximately 12 weeks of summer and 20 additional days throughout the school year that school is closed. Child care programs provide wraparound care-most as early as 6 am and late as 6 pm (Some Child Care programs are also available for overnights and weekends as well). Child Care programs and schools share in this responsibility to the community. They can build upon the skills and knowledge from each program to ensure every child graduates from school college and career ready.

Furthermore, this bill aligns us with most other states, states that have adapted universal preschool in the intervening years since Wisconsin are creating universal preschool programs allowing licensed child care and schools to all participate and most, if a Bachelor's is required, don't require the "license" and some even have a pathway to Bachelors from an Associate's like this bill does. Federally, the only requirement for education is the state's current licensing requirements to teach that age group. Head Start requires an Associate's degree. Bills that have been introduced, or are being written all change the "recommendation" language to "required." This proactively aligns us with coming federal changes to funding either through new legislation or updates to the child care development block grant (CCDBG) so we don't lose out on access to those funds to support the care and education of our youngest and most vulnerable learners-our children. Furthermore, the federal government emphasizes that public funding for preschool (3k and 4k) should not interfere with working parents to access child care. Meaning that those funds shouldn't then negatively impact the availability, cost, or quality, of child care for children in the community.

Here is a resource that explains how to successfully implement preschool programming in a mixed delivery system (we call it Community Collaboration in Wisconsin). https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/new-occ/resource/files/pdgb5_mixeddeliverydatasetoinformfamilies_acc.pdf

DCF licensing ensures that the teachers, aides, and other staff in licensed child care programs have set maximum numbers of children, minimum child development education, cpr, first aid, abuse and neglect, abusive head trauma, and SIDS training along with annual continuing education requirements of at least 15 hours annually in related professional development.

Furthermore, child care programs have access to Pyramid model <https://challengingbehavior.org/pyramid-model/overview/basics/>, mentors, food program specialists, youngstar technical consultants, accreditation resources, etc to ensure their programs are meeting the care and educational needs consistently across the state. For children under 3 with special needs, B-3 can come into the program to provide therapy for qualifying children, and children 3 and up services can be obtained through the school district, and, if the child care is determined to be the least restrictive environment, the school comes into the child care. DPI can only make recommendations, but, ultimately, it is up to the local school boards to determine class sizes, educational requirements for aides and staff, types of trainings, continuing education (lifetime licenses), curriculum, playground equipment, schedules, etc. and that varies widely across the state.

Many of the urban districts in the state already adhere to the Community Approach as it is recommended by DPI as a tried and true program. <https://dpi.wi.gov/early-childhood/kind/4k/4kca>). DPI recommends the community approach and has this 54 reasons districts should implement the Community Approach on their 4k community collaboration website:

https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/early-childhood/4kca/pdf/54_benefits_4kca_list.pdf

With the teacher shortage in both k-12 public schools and child care programs alike, it makes sense to keep children in one location instead of moving them from the child care program for a few hours a day so that 2 teachers are needed for the same child. Furthermore, staffing in child care is difficult to do when you need someone with 1 full day and a split shift availability per week and also available during all non-school days for that same child in group centers, and impossible for family child care to save a "slot" for those few hours and days without charging for the full week. This bill will help reduce the number of teachers needed for the same number of children.

Finally, 4k is optional and according to reports a significant percentage of 4 year olds in Wisconsin are not receiving publicly funded 4k. However, that doesn't mean they aren't accessing education in child care programs. Parents are opting their children out for a wide variety of reasons and by allowing all interested and qualified child care programs to participate this number will organically increase, thereby increasing our participation numbers to be more reflective of reality. Also, NIEER, is the national standard for collecting the data on participation, cost, quality, etc of preschool programs across the country. Wisconsin only meets 3 of 10 benchmarks and by moving to the community collaboration and creating standards for all programs that provide preschool care and education we could move toward meeting more of the standards. https://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Wisconsin_YB2022.pdf

Entire country: <https://nieer.org/the-state-of-preschool-yearbook-2022>

While we are 7th in access, we are 41st in meeting the benchmarks. The ranking list is attached.

Family child care, which Green County has significantly more family child care programs than group centers, as is the case in most rural areas of the state, are also recommended as a way to

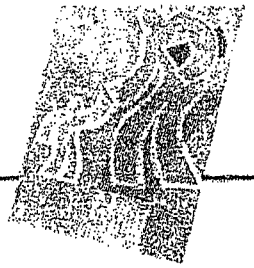
achieve universal preschool in high quality environments: <https://nieer.org/research-report/conditions-for-success>

Currently, very few family child care are allowed to be community collaboration sites-there are zero in Green County.

In conclusion we support this bill and ask that you vote yes for these changes. This bill was written to break down barriers without erecting new ones and also, in our opinion, will increase accessibility, affordability, and quality of early care and education for all children in our communities.

Thank you,
Jillynn Niemeier Green County Child Care Network President

St. John's Lutheran Ministries
Church, Child Development Center, School



I am writing to ask you to please consider co-sponsoring or supporting **LRB-5595/1** requiring Community Approach to four-year old kindergarten.

This is a bill that will make it possible for childcare providers/centers to offer 4K in their own programs and community. Giving them quality, early learning experience. This bill will allow flexible care and year-round care, affordability and promotes educational continuity. Under this legislation, parents have a choice to open enroll their child into any 4K program, regardless of location.

Using the community approach as we do here in the Portage school district, we are the leaders for other districts. Often, I have been at meetings, and I have heard I wish we did it like Portage School district. We have set the model for others over the years. Centers like ours would not be open if we did not have 4-year-olds and 4K. Reason why my center is set up like it is "*one stop shopping*" (birth - 12 years old). Offer care for the whole family. A family of three can be dropped off here and meet all three children's needs. 4K, wrap around when 4K is over, and no school days, middle brother, no problem 2-year-old room and infant room for the little. Think about it. It is 5:30 pm, work is over now, you have to drive to pick up the kids. Mom has one place to stop, one center, one pick up.

This bill will also offer fair compensation for 4K programs. Every 4K program receive a different amount of funding. Why is that?

Next, this is my personal observation. Have a 4-year-old you know get on a public-school bus. Scary - for the first few days I would have to go on the bus and remove one or two of our children from under the seats on the bus as they were scared, and it was safer under the seat. If they came from our 4K program the bus would not be an issue.

Help other districts follow Portage School District and support **LRB 5595/1** Community Approach and Mix Delivery at 95% to programs and 5% to district. The funds should go with the program.

Serving Gods Children

Debra A. Drew
Administrative Director
St. John's Child Development Center
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(608)742-9000 x2

*St. John's Child Development Center
426 W. Emmett Street
Portage, WI. 53901*

*Administrative Director: Debra A. Drew
- ddrew@stjohnsportage.com
(608) 742-9000 x2*

Dear Representative Goeben,

I am asking you to co-sponsor or support LRB-5595/1 requiring Community Approach to four-year-old kindergarten.

This bill is solid and makes it possible for childcare providers to offer 4K in their own program. A successful 4K program requires a relationship and play-based curriculum that is typical in a childcare setting. This bill will support families in the workforce and give parents another option for their child's education and care.

Additional benefits of this bill are listed below:

- The amended Community Approach allows children who need care to remain in one location, minimizing transitions.
- The physical environment in childcare programs is specifically designed for children under the age of 6 years.
- Children who need therapy can receive it in their natural setting.
- Families can select a program that best suits their family.
- Families with younger siblings can have their child at one location.
- Families that utilize 4K usually stay in the same district providing future school district enrollment.
- Transportation costs will be reduced for school districts.
- The overall quality of early education will be improved.
- Helps to reduce childcare costs.
- Leverages essential infrastructure.

Thanks for your consideration,



Bekah Stauffacher
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872 10th Avenue, New Glarus 53574



**Testimony to the Senate Education Committee
Senate Bill 973 / Assembly Bill 1035
Wisconsin Education Association Council**

The Wisconsin Education Association Council is opposed to Senate Bill 973.

Wisconsin educators have several concerns about this bill and believe it would not only have serious implications for local public school funding but, even worse, it would result in some of our youngest learners receiving instruction from childcare staff who are not licensed teachers nor employed by school districts. This is in direct contradiction to Act 20, including allowing childcare centers to select their own learning materials instead of using district curriculum.

There are many unanswered questions around how interventions for learning difficulties would be addressed, as well as how special education would be delivered. Areas of transportation and the impact on the Wisconsin Shares Program are also unaddressed.

This bill can be equated to a voucher program for childcare centers, as money from local public schools would be siphoned to private childcare centers. It should be noted that public school 4K is funded by the state currently at 50 percent.

The solution to Wisconsin's childcare crisis should be comprehensive and require the highest standards. This bill does neither.

Peggy Wirtz-Olsen, President
Bob Baxter, Executive Director



February 6, 2024

To: Members of the Senate Committee on Education

From: Faith M. VanderHorst, Executive Director, Southeastern Wisconsin Schools Alliance (SWSA)

Re: In Opposition to SB 973- Relating to Community approach to 4K

Chairman Jagler and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share our position on SB 973, today. My name is Faith VanderHorst. I am the Executive Director for the Southeastern Wisconsin Schools Alliance (SWSA). SWSA serves 27 urban and suburban public school districts with a combined enrollment of more than 200,000 students (approximately 25% of Wisconsin's public school students).

Our members understand and appreciate the importance of a strong 4k program for our students. It provides the foundation for learning and builds social skills through play. It is through this opportunity that students begin their literacy journey. We oppose SB973 because it does not provide for a strong critical first year for our youngest learners. We oppose the Bill because the teachers do not have to be licensed by DPI, nor do they need to be mentored by a licensed teacher (while working on a four year degree). Our members oppose the provision that as non-licensed teachers that they do not have to have literacy training and that they are exempt from the FORT test.

Our members are concerned about the strength of implementation of ACT 20 requirements by the child care center. We understand the importance of 2023 Act 20, and the importance of ensuring that all students, across the state of Wisconsin, are reading at grade level by the time they reach third grade. The child care center may utilize any curriculum that meets the Wisconsin Early Learning Standards. While they may utilize these standards, they may not be the same as those the district has chosen. As the child transitions to 5K, changing curriculum may affect the student's progress. The center will need to implement the new universal screener. Do they have the technology to install and implement the screener? Who will be responsible for the results? Will the end of the year results be shared with the district 5k program? How will the Center handle Special Needs students? By Federal law, Special Education teachers must be licensed. Will they be able to evaluate students and create IEPs? If not, will these students then be automatically referred to the district?

Honorable members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for your consideration. We ask that you consider these concerns as you evaluate this Bill. We are dedicated to providing the strongest possible year for our earliest learners and we feel that this Bill does not fulfill the intent and requirements of ACT 20. Our desire is to provide a strong foundation and love for learning for all 4k students.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully,

Faith M. VanderHorst
SWSA Executive Director
262-853-8838
swsaexecdirector4@gmail.com

www.schoolsalliance.com



Date: February 6, 2024

To: Senate Committee on Education
Senator John Jagler, Chairman

From: Bianca Hill, President

Re: Support for SB 973 - Community Approach to Four-Year-Old Kindergarten

The Wisconsin Child Care Administrators Association (WCCAA) is the voice of child care administrators and owners, the people who run child care centers day in and day out across Wisconsin. WCCAA is proud to advocate for these heroes and those who work with them on the front lines of our early care and education workforce.

WCCAA has been advocating for a “mixed delivery” model for four-year-old kindergarten for a number of years. We define mixed delivery as a system in which early learning programs can be located in any school, licensed child care center, nonprofit or for profit, licensed family child care home, Head Start program, or other community-based program that meets agreed-upon quality criteria. We believe this facilitates a healthy network of providers diverse enough to meet children’s, communities,’ and families’ needs.

A mixed delivery model is the most effective way to realize the opportunity to appropriately support children, families, and the economy. A mixed delivery system leverages a combination of public and private funds and utilizes existing infrastructure in licensed center- and family-based child care programs, public schools, and community-based organizations to maximize access to high-quality, affordable options for all children through age five.

WCCAA supports SB 973, which focuses on the Community Approach, a mixed delivery model, which provides every four-year-old in the community access to a quality, early learning experience. Under this legislation, parents have the option to open enroll their child into any 4K program, regardless of location.

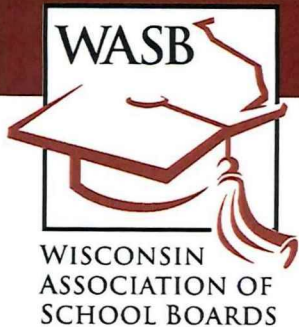
Highlights of SB 973:

- Child care centers in good standing may contract with their local school district to provide 4K.
- Quarterly, DPI sends 95% of the 4K net per pupil revenue limit directly to the child care center, and the remaining 5% to the school district.
- 4K child care teachers are required to have a Bachelor's degree, or an Associate's degree if pursuing a Bachelor's degree.
- Child care centers may use any curriculum that meets the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards.
- The school district may not require policies that are inconsistent with DCF licensing standards.

Advantages of Community Approach for 4K

- Expands access to 4K for more families.
- 4K would be part of full-day year-round care without transitions from child care to public school and back. Seamless care from birth through 4K.
- Child care ratios provide for small class sizes, more one-on-one opportunity for teachers to identify delays in children.
- Child care will have improved access to special needs personnel to offer a better academic foundation.
- Improving the quality of child care by implementing 4K criteria.
- Support to parents/families from child care staff with daily contact.

Wisconsin needs the long-term, sustained mixed delivery system that SB 973 seeks to provide. The start of a system is already in place in Wisconsin. A number of other states have already implemented mixed delivery systems and it is time that Wisconsin follows their lead. Stabilizing early care and education is what is best for Wisconsin's economy and Wisconsin's children, birth through graduation. On behalf of WCCAA members around the state, we ask for your support of SB 973.



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FAX: 608-257-8386 • WEBSITE: WASB.ORG

DANIEL M. ROSSMILLER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TO: Members, Senate Committee on Education
FROM: Chris Kulow, WASB Government Relations Director
DATE: February 6, 2024
RE: **OPPOSITION to SENATE BILL 973**, relating to requiring the community approach to four-year-old kindergarten.

The Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB) is a voluntary membership association representing all 421 of Wisconsin's locally elected public school boards. School board members and the WASB share a strong interest in ensuring high quality four-year-old kindergarten (4K). We have strong concerns about the impact this legislation will have on 4K programming in the State of Wisconsin.

The WASB founding principle is local control of education-related decision-making by elected school boards. SB 973 removes local control over how school districts provide 4K programming by prohibiting school-based 4K programs and allowing ONLY community-based 4K programs. The WASB believes school boards should continue to have authority to make the decision of how to provide 4K programming to their communities based on local circumstances. For example, some districts do not have community-based childcare providers to partner with (so-called "childcare deserts"). Families in these areas would be deprived of 4K programming by this legislation.

The bill likewise removes local control by dictating the terms of contracts for community-based 4K programming. Again, we support our elected school boards having the flexibility to set the parameters of these partnerships.

We are also concerned about the quality of the 4K programming that this bill would create. The bill would not require licensed teachers in these programs. With the recent focus on improving early literacy (2023 Act 20) in our state, this bill would take us in the wrong direction. These teachers would not be required to complete the new reading instruction training required by Act 20.

The bill also provides childcare providers the authority to choose any curriculum that meets the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards even if it does not align with the curriculum used by the school district. This erodes the ability of local school districts to work with partner childcare providers to have curriculum continuity between 4K and Kindergarten, particularly if districts are selecting a new more robust reading curriculum to improve literacy outcomes. The bill also allows larger class sizes for 4K programs.

In conclusion, the WASB supports community-based 4K programming provided to families through partnerships between local childcare providers and school districts and there are many examples of successful programs around the state. The WASB also acknowledges the challenges faced by childcare providers. School districts lose employees who are in short supply when affordable, high-quality childcare is not available. That being said, the WASB is strongly opposed to SB 973 and does not believe it is a viable solution to address these issues.

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February 6, 2024

I would like to thank Senate Chair Jagler and Senate Education Committee members for the opportunity to offer written testimony on behalf of WiRSA (Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance)

My name is Jeff Eide. I am the Executive Director of the Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance (WiRSA). Our organization represents and supports over 240 members, which includes 178 rural school districts.

Our organization is registering in opposition to SB 973.

Prior to leading WiRSA, I was an acting superintendent. In addition, our school district understood we were in a childcare desert. Like many of our rural and town school districts, my rural school district has become a leader in this arena for our communities. My school board moved to full-day 4K. We passed a referendum to build a child care center connected to our united campus best to serve our parents, children, and our community to most effectively meet the needs of our early childhood children.

Because we have a great 4K program, our certified teachers:

- 1) Have passed the required FORT test
- 2) Will be trained on the new literacy-approved curriculum and screener in Act 20
- 3) Are approved Licensed by the DPI.
- 4) Can meet the required and needed special education services

A community child care center would be exempt from:

1. Passing the FORT test
2. Approved Licensing from the Department of Public Instruction
3. Requiring special education services
4. Using the required screener approved through ACT 20
5. Using the approved curriculum through ACT 20

Because the State has placed so much focus on early literacy this year to create a solid foundation for the first year of literacy education for the student, I find it challenging to understand how this is the best for our early learners.

Membership statements/concerns:

The students that were in other 4K programs were not even closely prepared for our rigorous "K" program. This lack of preparation made it very difficult to teach to a high academic level in our "K" program because those students didn't have the proper 4K learning. School Districts are expected to get children at proficient levels in Reading and Math, yet you want to set up a situation that will result in less children attending school district 4K programs, which are much more effective.

The 95% payment to the provider is much higher than our current rate, and that really concerns me. We pay for the transportation, the early childhood and ELL support, and also help with curricular resources for the community partner site.

I am against anything that spends public money in private places with little oversight or where they don't have to follow the same requirements that we do in terms of Act 20, FORT Testing, Licenses, etc.”

We are running a full day every day, 4K. The state only partially provides for children in this program, and to then strip further funds away might lead to a situation that exasperates the already tight budget and then forces the District to reduce its services.

Thank you for reading my testimony and a few member's comments/concerns.

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Strong Schools, Strong Communities