

August 19, 2023

Dear Woodbridge School District's Board of Education Members,

Our names are Grace Kong and Ben Carlson. We have two children, Aidan and Audrey. Aidan is five and will start kindergarten at Beecher this fall (DOB 5/20/2018) and Audrey is almost three (DOB 9/24/2020). We are writing this letter because we are concerned about the recently passed legislation that changed the start of kindergarten age to five years.

Due to the new legislation, Audrey will miss the cutoff date to start kindergarten in 2025 because her birthday falls 24 days after the start of September. We were informed that the new legislation allows school districts to make exceptions, and we hope the Woodbridge School District will allow for some flexibility in implementing this new law.

We have specific concerns with Audrey repeating pre-k. Audrey is currently in daycare (Woodbridge Child Center [WCC]). She is developmentally (e.g., emotionally and academically) on par with or even surpassing her peers, many of whom are almost a year older than her. We think that having her repeat pre-k again at WCC will be disadvantageous to her social and educational growth because she would have to attend the same class doing the same curriculum with children who were previously one year behind her. To avoid this situation, we will need to find a pre-k program that can appropriately stimulate her development. This will not be easy because there aren't enough pre-k programs, especially given the new influx of children born Sep-Dec who need to be enrolled in pre-k. We strongly believe that she will thrive in kindergarten along with her peers who are born before September 1, 2020. Finally, one additional year of daycare/pre-k was not in our family budget, and this will pose an unexpected financial challenge for our family.

Here are some proposed solutions that we hope the Board would consider: 1) provide some leeway for children whose birthdays are between Sep-Dec for the next few years until there are more equitable pre-k options (e.g., more availability, programs, financial support for parents/programs), and 2) allow exceptions for kindergarten enrollment if the child's birthday fall between Sept-Dec with either age-appropriate and empirically validated testing to assess kindergarten readiness (if such tests exist) or letters of recommendation from individuals who can evaluate child's readiness for kindergarten (e.g., pre-k teachers, pediatrician).

We greatly appreciate all that you do for children and families in Woodbridge, and we thank you for considering our concerns. We are happy to have further discussions.

Sincerely,

Grace Kong & Ben Carlson

grace.kong.carlson@gmail.com

Ben.s.carlson@gmail.com

89 Center Road
Woodbridge CT 06525