

Testimony for SENATE BILL 16-023

Allysen Santilli

My name is Allysen Santilli and I thank you for hearing my testimony today on behalf of SENATE BILL 16-023, to support the increased funding of full-day kindergarten.

Past NEA President Dennis Van Roekel said, "High-quality early childhood education and full-day kindergarten are fundamental to a student's long term success and shouldn't be determined by their parents' income... [It] is the right thing to do."

NEA recommends, among other things:

- Free, publicly funded, quality kindergarten programs in all states.
- **Mandatory full-day kindergarten.** Just 14 states require school districts to offer full-day kindergarten.

A variety of studies show the additional successes gained by children who have received early childhood education.

In this day and age where an importance is placed on testing and results for our kids, teachers and schools, shouldn't we be giving them the best chance to succeed? If we are instituting required testing in kindergarten, why is the curriculum itself not required? If we want positive test results in first grade, why are we not preparing our children in kindergarten? This is their time to have meaningful play where they learn the social skills that we no longer have time to teach in the traditional grades. By teaching our kids how to attend school – sit still, stand in line, interact with other kids and teachers as well as the academics of math, reading etc. they are more prepared to hit the ground running when they reach first grade. This can't be available only to the kids who can "afford" it or who live in the right areas.

I am a parent of a current kindergartener and a 2016-17 kindergartener, daughter of a teacher and daughter-in-law of a kindergarten teacher. Education is our greatest asset. Let's do whatever we can to fund kindergarten to get our kids off to a great start and not let Colorado and Jeffco fall behind.

Thank you.