

Legislation would close down childcare centers

Written by By New Mexico Child Care and Education Association
Friday, 15 February 2019 09:50



Other legislation would keep them open

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. – A new bill introduced in the New Mexico legislature Feb. 7 would have the effect of closing down hundreds of childcare centers across the state and doing serious financial damage to all of them, and displacing children according to the New Mexico Child Care and Education Association (NMCCEA).

The bill, SB 298, by Senator William Soules, would forcibly remove all four-year-olds from all childcare centers in the state and place them in the public school system under the Public Education Department. This would have the effect of removing 40% of the children now in childcare centers and put many of them out of business.

“This bill would close down hundreds of childcare centers and hurt many families and children,” said Crystal Tapia, policy chair of NMCCEA and executive director of Noah’s Ark Children’s Academy in Albuquerque. “This bill would take kids in quality PreK programs and force them to go to public school programs that don’t always have the outcomes that we have for the kids.”

Currently, NM PreK programs for four-year-olds are run in both childcare centers and in PED facilities across the state, and it works quite well, according to Sondra Carpenter, president of the New Mexico Child Care and Education Association (NMCCEA). The money is split evenly between CYFD programs at childcare centers and PED programs. This new legislation would wipe that out and direct money to the PED programs and cut out the childcare centers under CYFD.

“You have no idea the disruption this would cause,” said Tapia. “This will rip these kids out of their schools and make them go to PED programs that can’t do what we are trained to do. Families will suffer.”

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In addition, the closing down of childcare centers across the state will leave a serious situation for parents with younger children and infants with no place to locate childcare for their kids.

“There will be almost no childcare centers in the state, if this goes through,” said Carpenter. “So people won’t have anywhere to put their kids, and the care of the children of working parents will suffer.”

And the lack of childcare centers would actually create a serious problem for the PED program, which runs only until two o’clock. “There would be no childcare for these kids when they get out and parents would have to leave work early every day and try to find someplace else to put them,” said Carpenter.

Advocates for the current system also are asking why the public schools want to take on the PreK programs.

“We support universal PreK for all New Mexican children,” said Tapia, “but why does PED want to pay the hundreds of millions of dollars to create facilities when those facilities already exist at our centers?”

In addition, recent studies show that the outcomes for children at the childcare centers under CYFD actually have better outcomes for the children than the PED programs.

“Why would we rip these kids and put them in PED programs when their outcomes aren’t always as good as ours?” said Carpenter.

Childcare centers across the state are organizing to stop this legislation, with petitions and letters to their legislators. Interested parties can go to: <http://nmccea.org/saveourchildcarecenters/> to learn more.

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In addition, a separate education bill now being considered (SB22), the Early Childhood Education and Care Department, would allow childcare centers to remain open by sharing new PreK funds between CYFD child care centers and PED programs, as NM PreK does now. This bill is scheduled to be heard Friday, 8:30 AM, in Room 321 at the State Capitol.

NMCCEA supports SB 22 and opposes SB 298, which strips the child care centers of students.

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