

Chairman Eissler and members of the Public Education Committee.

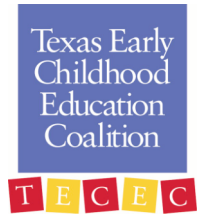
Good morning. I am Dr. Donald Smith, Director of Research and Public Policy for the Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition (TECEC). Thank you for this opportunity to offer our support of Representative Villarreal's HB 136 and the efforts to raise the awareness of parents to the availability of prekindergarten classes for eligible children in Texas. I am here today representing the Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition, a coalition of 275 organizations whose members include thousands of educators, administrators, child care providers and parents who recognize the great value in early education.

Parents in today's society struggle to meet the needs of their children while balancing a broad range of responsibilities outside of the family. Many times, the efforts of the parents could be simplified with the availability of basic information about raising children, resources and support.

HB 136 provides such an opportunity. This legislation creates a mechanism for raising the awareness of parents of eligible children to the opportunities available for pre kindergarten education. A collaborative effort involving state agencies and local school districts will deliver timely information to parents about existing prekindergarten services. Increased awareness followed by enrollment in available pre-kindergarten services has the potential to produce significant returns for children, families and the community. Pre kindergarten children in quality programs

- Develop basic learning skills,
- Learn to interact with others and form stable relationships,
- Avoid the harmful influences that lead to mental health problems, substance abuse, criminal activity and prison,
- Continue their education and enter institutions of higher learning, and
- Become productive members of society.

Dr. Donald J. Smith, Jr.
Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition
Testimony to the Public Education Committee
Texas House of Representatives



The Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition supports HB 136 and we applaud the members for recognizing the need to partner with the parents of eligible pre kindergarten children.

Thank you.