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To the Honorable Members of the Ohio House of Representatives,

I am writing to express my concerns to House Bill 114, specifically the proposal to move Ohio's kindergarten eligibility cutoff date to September 30. I am not against the idea of House Bill 114 to provide consistency across the state of Ohio. However, I support making August 1 the cutoff date for Kindergarten over the September 30 date, which better aligns with research on child development and kindergarten readiness.

If the cutoff date is September 30, that would allow 4-year-olds to begin Kindergarten before they turn 5 in the month of August or September. Allowing 4-year-olds into kindergarten places undue pressure on children who are not yet developmentally ready—academically, socially, or emotionally—for the structure and expectations of a full-day kindergarten program. Numerous studies and classroom experiences show that younger kindergarteners often struggle more with attention, self-regulation, and foundational literacy and math skills compared to their older peers. These early struggles can have lasting impacts on a child's confidence and attitude toward school.

The historical context matters: a September 30 cutoff was more appropriate in the 1980s or 1990s, when kindergarten was largely play-based. For example, my own kindergarten report card from the 1992-1993 listed skills—such as cutting, naming letters, name writing, and identifying shapes—that are now expected of preschoolers. Today's kindergarten curriculum is far more rigorous, making it unrealistic and developmentally inappropriate for many 4-year-olds.

Many school districts across Ohio and the nation have already recognized these challenges and have moved their cutoff date to August 1 out of concern for student well-being and classroom balance. This shift ensures that children entering kindergarten are more developmentally prepared, setting them up for success both in the short and long term.

I teach in a district that uses the September 30 cutoff date, and our primary teachers have been advocating for a shift to August 1. Every district in the county adjacent to ours has already made the change. Below are a few specific examples illustrating why this adjustment is so important:

- “Alexander,” was a preschool student with an August birthday in my class. He demonstrated delays in social and language skills. We recommended an additional year of preschool, but his parents chose to send him to kindergarten. Because of his developmental readiness level, he ultimately had to repeat kindergarten. With an August 1 cutoff, he would have had the extra year he needed before entering Kindergarten.
- A first-grade teacher in my building currently has five students with August or September birthdays who began first grade as 5-year-olds. All five of these students fall within the lowest 20% of the class academically. Had the cutoff been August 1, these students

would have been in kindergarten—where they developmentally belonged—and likely would be experiencing greater success.

- A veteran teacher in another building has tracked her students with August and September birthdays over the years. Of 26 such students, 16 have exhibited behavioral, social-emotional, or academic challenges directly related to their younger age and developmental readiness.

As an advocate for young learners, I urge you to prioritize what is best for children's developmental needs by making August 1 the cutoff date for Kindergarten. Our youngest learners deserve a strong start built on readiness, not rushed expectations.

Thank you for your attention and for your continued commitment to Ohio's children and schools.

Sincerely,  
Megan Holcomb  
Preschool Teacher in Princeton City School District