

Home Education Foundation

PO Box 9064, Palmerston North 4441, New Zealand
Ph. +64 6 357-4399 Fax: +64 6 357-4389 mail@hef.org.nz www.hef.org.nz
Charities Commission Registration Nbr.: CC24585 G.S.T. Nbr.: 55-380-562

Media Release – How Home-Based Child Care Saves the Government Money

February 12, 2013

Palmerston North, NZ – The ‘Social Obligations’ in the government’s Social Security (Benefit Categories and Work Focus) Amendment Bill will force beneficiaries to send their preschool children to an approved early childhood education (ECE) provider for at least 15 hours per week. One of the reasons for this is obviously in order to remove obstacles to the parents finding jobs and getting off the benefit sooner. But Barbara Smith, of the Home Education Foundation (HEF) of New Zealand, says that the cost of subsidised ECE can outweigh the cost of the benefit.

“The average cost of a year’s ECE for one child attending 15 hours per week is approximately NZ\$5,112.90 per year,” says Mrs Smith. “This is how much a solo parent on the benefit will save the government per year per preschool child if she cares for her children at home.”

But, says Mrs Smith, the quality of care available at home, with its constant mental stimulation, interaction with adults, and parent mentoring, is something which New Zealand ECE in its current state is unable to provide.

“In the US, a cost analysis carried out by Arthur J Rolnick and Rob Grunewald of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis looked at the cost of raising the quality of ECE services. They concluded that the total resources needed for a high-quality ECE program for an at-risk 3 or 4 year old would be about US\$10,000 - 15,000 per student per year for a full-day programme that included parent mentoring.

“A mother caring for her children at home, especially if she provides learning materials, as many do, is giving her child a high quality, full-day programme that includes parent mentoring—and the government doesn’t have to spend a cent.”

Mrs Smith says that this is exactly what home educating mothers—whether they plan for their children to attend school once they reach school age or not—do when they decide to provide home-based child care for their children.

“A mother providing home-based child care for her preschoolers is offering a better product than available at the registered ECE providers,” says Mrs Smith, citing research available on the HEF website. “And she’s providing it for free.”

But as Mrs Smith points out, many of these mothers go on to educate their children at home through their school years. That’s when the savings really begin to mount.

“According to Ministry of Education statistics, New Zealand spends about \$6,790.51 per primary school student per year and \$8,501.67 per secondary school student per year. This is how much money home educating sole parents save the government annually. A single mother home educating three children could be saving the government around \$22,000 per year, which is more than her benefit.

“If she has special needs children, she could save the government even more: special schools spend up to \$160,000 per year on each student.”

The government should recognise the cost benefits of home-based child care, both socially and financially, says Mrs Smith. “If the Social Security Bill passes, it will be illegal to make this responsible choice to care for your children at home. It doesn’t make sense.”

Concerned New Zealanders should write, call, and visit their local MPs and the Select Committee, Mrs Smith urges.

Tell your friends. Make appointments to see the Committee members or your local MP.

The Select Committee members are Jacinda Ardern, Simon Bridges, Melissa Lee, Jan Logie, Asenati Lole-Taylor, Peseta Sam Lotu-iga, Tim Macindoe, Alfred Ngaro, Rajen Prasad, Mike Sabin and Su’a William Sio. Letters to individual MPs should be sent to this address (no stamp necessary):

Parliament Office
Private Bag 18888
Parliament Buildings
Wellington 6160

More information on the bill and contact details for MPs can be found at <http://hef.org.nz/2013/urgent-action-required-social-security-bill/>

“Sole mothers can save the government money by educating their children at home. It’s time that was recognised.”

About the Home Education Foundation

The Home Education Foundation has been informing parents for 27 years about the fantastic opportunity to de-institutionalise our sons and daughters and to embrace the spiritual, intellectual and academic freedom that is ours for the taking. Through conferences, journals, newsletters and all kinds of personal communications, we explain the vision of handcrafting each child into a unique individual, complete with virtuous character, a hunger for service to others, academic acumen and a strong work ethic. For more information, please visit www.hef.org.nz or more specifically hef.org.nz/2012/make-a-submission-reject-compulsory-early-education-for-3-year-olds/

Contact

To learn more about this bill, please contact

Barbara Smith
National Director
PO Box 9064
Palmerston North 4441
New Zealand
ph. 06 357-4399
06 354-7699
barbara@hef.org.nz

