



PHILADELPHIA
1800 JFK Blvd., Suite 1900A
Philadelphia, PA 19103
T 215-238-6970
F 215-772-3125

PITTSBURGH
429 Fourth Ave., Suite 1910
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
T 412-258-2120
F 412-535-8225

Parents Urge Philadelphia City Council to Address Preschool Pushout

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Contact: Lindsay Wagner, Education Law Center-PA, 215-701-4264, lwagner@elc-pa.org

PHILADELPHIA — Parent advocates today urged Philadelphia City Council to address preschool pushout – the suspension, expulsion, and exclusion of young children from early learning programs – sharing firsthand accounts of how these practices harm children and families and disproportionately affect Black and Brown children and children with disabilities.

During a City Council Committee on Education hearing on preschool pushout, convened by Committee Chair Councilmember Isaiah Thomas, parents described the lasting impact that exclusion from early learning settings had on their children and families. Testimony from parents [Jennifer Garrison](#), [Chandell Craig-Cromwell](#), and [Hadria Leon](#) underscored how systemic racism and ableism contribute to the exclusion of children as young as 2 and 3 years old from programs intended to support their development and learning.

Parent Hadria Leon shared the excitement she experienced taking a photo of her son on his first day of preschool, but by the time she returned to pick him up that day, she was informed he would no longer be able to attend. “I was so scared. I talked with the school a few more times. I was devastated. I was crying. I begged the director. The school refused my offers of support and my ideas for how to best support my child, and racism played a part in my experience,” said Leon.

ELC-PA Attorney Rose Wehrman, whose work focuses on preschool pushout, [also testified](#) and offered insights into the scope of the issue and urgently needed solutions. **ELC-PA called on state and local leaders to take action to end preschool pushout by prohibiting student suspension and expulsion in early childhood settings and ensure that young children receive the supports they need to succeed.** ELC-PA also urged policymakers to strengthen access to Early Intervention and support services, fully and equitably fund early childhood programs, and improve transparency and accountability for these programs.

“Every child deserves access to nurturing, inclusive early learning environments,” said Wehrman. “When young children are excluded from preschool because their needs are not being met, they lose critical opportunities to learn and thrive. Policymakers have both the responsibility and the ability to change that.”

In its April 2026 report, [Ending Preschool Pushout in Pennsylvania: Parent Testimonies and a Path Forward](#), ELC-PA documented the experiences of families whose preschool-aged children, including 2, 3, and 4-year-olds, were pushed out of early learning programs

Ensuring that all of Pennsylvania’s children have equal access to a quality public education.

through suspension and expulsion, both formal and informal. The report describes the harm this practice causes Pennsylvania's youngest learners, particularly Black and Brown children and children with disabilities.

This hearing builds on growing calls for action to end preschool pushout and ensure all young children can access high-quality early learning opportunities. While additional funding, training, and support services are essential, policymakers must also implement an immediate solution to this harm. Prohibiting suspension, expulsion, and other exclusionary practices in early childhood settings is a necessary step toward protecting young children's civil rights and ensuring they have the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive.

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*The **Education Law Center-PA (ELC-PA)** is a nonprofit, legal advocacy organization with offices in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, dedicated to ensuring that all children in Pennsylvania have access to a quality public education. Through legal representation, impact litigation, community engagement, and policy advocacy, ELC-PA advances the rights of underserved children, including children living in poverty, children of color, children in the foster care and juvenile justice systems, children with disabilities, multilingual learners, LGBTQ+ youth, children experiencing homelessness, and children at the intersection of multiple underserved identities. For more information, visit elc-pa.org or [@edlawcenterpa.bsky.social](https://www.bsky.social/@edlawcenterpa) on Bluesky, [@edlawcenterpa](https://www.instagram.com/edlawcenterpa) on Instagram, [Education Law Center-PA](https://www.linkedin.com/company/educationlawcenter) on LinkedIn, and facebook.com/educationlawcenter on Facebook.*