2/18/2021

To the House Children and Seniors Committee, Chairwoman Concannon:

I appreciate you taking time to read our testimony in **support of HB 2371**.

My name is Jeremy Fite and I am the Executive Director of Hilltop Child Development Center, Inc. My facility serves over 300 students per day, ages 1-12, and touches over 265 families in Douglas County and the surrounding areas.

The last year has been so impactful on so many people. We have worked very hard to assist families who are the most affected. Kansas restrictions on SNAP and Child Care Subsidies are disproportionately affecting the mothers in our programs. The burden of childcare has always fallen on the shoulders of the mothers. Limited job options and the rising costs of childcare are making it incredibly difficult for these families to sustain. Families are fighting to do what is best for their families, and existing restrictions are just another barrier to an already difficult battle. We know that families that don't have the stress of feeding their families and paying for childcare can focus more on things like social/emotional needs of the kids and themselves. I have conversations on a weekly basis with a family that struggles to pay their childcare fees because they must choose food or care.

Another unique part of my center is our service to family's post-secondary education. Each year, our facility serves hundreds of families attending the University of Kansas, Johnson County Community College, Washburn and other small or online schools. On average, 85% of those families would not be able to complete their degree without the care that our center is able to provide. With additional supports, like those supported in HB 2371, we could provide more families with an opportunity to pursue their career aspirations without the stress that comes along with supporting a young child.

I sincerely appreciate your consideration for HB 2371, and hope that Kansas will pass this bill to help the families of our great state.

Thanks,

Jeremy Fite
Executive Director