



March 6, 2024

**House Committee on Commerce, Labor and Economic Development
Chairman Sean Tarwater**

**RE: HB 2785 In person Neutral Testimony of
Dawn McWilliams, CEO – Boys & Girls Clubs of Topeka on behalf of the Kansas Alliance
of Boys & Girls Clubs**

Chairman Tarwater and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today before the House Committee on Commerce, Labor and Economic Development. I'm Dawn McWilliams, CEO for Boys & Girls Clubs of Topeka, here to offer comments on HB 2785 on behalf of the Kansas Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs.

As background, Boys & Girls Clubs serve youth ages 5 to 18 with a focus on youth who need us most. The Kansas Alliance is comprised of 14 local Boys & Girls Club organizations operating at over 70 program sites in 23 communities and on military bases in Kansas. In 2022, Clubs served nearly 11,000 youth during the year.

Boys & Girls Clubs are organizations that provide before and after school programs for school age children during the school year and summer. As youth development organizations, Clubs offer a safe environment, supportive relationships, and enriching experiences—much like child care. Clubs focus on building skills for young people in areas that include health and wellness, character and leadership programs, and academic success. Our engagement with youth is intended to develop teamwork, communication, and perseverance and ultimately develop targeted skills that include workforce readiness, leadership, and advocacy.

It is important to note that Club sites, such as the 14 Clubs sites I lead locally, are largely licensed as drop-in programs (K.S.A. 65-527). Our Clubs interface with regulatory agencies in several ways. Each license for our program sites must be renewed annually with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE), including health and safety inspections. Each of our employees and volunteers who have regular on-going contact with children undergo annual background checks that are submitted to KDHE, and various positions are required to

meet certain training thresholds Further, we require annual inspections from the Fire Marshal's office or local fire inspector.

Because of our mission, we do not fit neatly into a regulatory structure focused on early childhood. For example, definitional distinctions around the terms child care facility and child care center are confusing relative to out-of-school time. HB 2785 appears to be largely silent on the types of organizations that define us as youth development, and we simply want to state our hope that critical needs of youth in the age range of children we serve are not discounted or overlooked.

Boys & Girls Clubs appreciate intentionality to streamline regulations designed to ease the burden of regulatory compliance and provide clarity for organizations seeking to offer critical services to Kansas families and their children. That effort is especially meaningful when outcomes are driven to ensure the needs of families, the safety of children, and the quality of programs and program delivery.

It is important to note that KDHE is currently working to formulate regulations that more closely align with the work of Clubs and other similar organizations as out-of-school time programs. We are hopeful these positive steps by KDHE to better define and improve regulatory language for out-of-school time programs continue forward and are not thwarted by the transfer of some licensing functions. We encourage essential programs serving older kids are not lost in an agency emphasizing early childhood needs. Further, with any reorganization of programs and licensing, we encourage that discussions with the Department for Children and Families, aimed at securing childcare subsidies for needy families served by our Clubs, continue on a positive track.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our testimony.