



Mid-America Region

TO: Members of the House Commerce, Labor, and Economic Development Committee

FROM: Sam Huenergardt, President & CEO
AdventHealth Mid-America Region

DATE: March 6, 2024

RE: House Bill 2785

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of **House Bill 2785**.

AdventHealth employs nearly 4,000 team members in Kansas at our hospitals in Shawnee Mission, South Overland Park, Ottawa and dozens of medical offices. As the Co-Chair of the Governor's Early Childhood Transition Task Force, I am excited to support this legislation to strengthen and streamline the delivery of childcare services.

At AdventHealth's Shawnee Mission campus in Johnson County, we are proud of our Early Learning program that began in 1979 as a tool to recruit qualified nurses during a nursing shortage. What started as a four-classroom childcare has grown and evolved into one of the largest childcare facilities in the state serving nearly 300 children, and one of only a few employer-based childcare centers in Johnson County.

Having childcare on site is a significant recruitment and retention tool, yet we still experience a long wait list and staffing challenges. We're privileged as a hospital to be able to support our Early Learning program to make it operational.

As Co-Chair of the Task Force, this bipartisan group brought perspectives from across the state and thoroughly reviewed what is working for Kansas families and what is not. The message from providers, employers and families is that coordination must be improved. Taking best practices from other states, including Missouri, who recently unified their early childhood services, the Task Force recommends combining governance into the Office of Early Childhood.

Childcare providers experience challenges with services currently spanning across four different state agencies. There are overlapping administrative burdens, lack of agency to agency information sharing, duplicative reporting and compliance, and families and providers would be better served by one entity.

This bill would primarily consolidate government agencies and programs to make it easier for businesses in Kansas to provide and expand childcare options while improving access for the working families who depend on it.

Thank you to the Committee for considering House Bill 2785, to bring efficiency to the services Kansas offers. I ask for your support to bring together childcare delivery services into the Office of Early Childhood. Thank you for your consideration and for your service to this committee.