

Proponent Testimony on HB 2785 House Committee on Commerce, Labor, and Economic Development

March 6, 2024

Committee Members:

As a 30-year advocate for kids and young families, I ask for your support of HB 2785. I served as a member of the Task Force and felt the process was comprehensive and took many points of view into consideration before making recommendations that are reflected in this bill. In my work in child care, home visiting, and family support, I often had to navigate multiple agencies, complex regulations, and varied funding restrictions to bring much-needed resources to the Southeast Kansas region. This bill creates alignment without adding bureaucracy and red tape. The time is right, and there is a broad base of support for this consolidation.

Most folks agree there is a child care crisis in Kansas. The Kansas Legislature can be part of the solution by passing this bill. I've assisted many individuals and organizations as they sought to create a local child care solution---it's not easy. Crossing multiple agencies for regulations and funding support can be daunting and can often cause a good idea to meet a dead end. We can't afford that anymore. We need all hands on deck as we seek to support working families in Kansas as they raise their children and bring them to school ready to learn.

Home visiting is one of the most effective strategies for child abuse and neglect prevention. We have several high-quality programs in Kansas, but their funding is disjointed, and services are difficult for families to navigate. This plan would align programs without adding unnecessary reporting and regulations for those out in the field providing the service.

Other states have gone through this process with success. The recommendation brought forward by the Task Force took lessons learned into consideration. This plan only adds 1 FTE and gets the consolidation into action quickly. I firmly believe this is a good plan and long overdue. I would be most pleased to share my perspective with you; I have had contact with each program impacted by the consolidation and believe each would greatly benefit from the process. Your consideration is much appreciated, and many thanks for taking quick action hearing this important bill.

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