To whom it may concern,

My name is Leslie Warlen. I am the Assistant Director of Health and Screening Services at Project Eagle. Project Eagle administers four programs in Wyandotte County, KS: Early Head Start Home Visiting, Educare Kansas City, Connections Comprehensive Early Childhood Screening and Referral Program, and a Family Resource Center. All of Project Eagle’s programs focus on the health and well-being of pregnant women and young children and aim to prepare children, engage families, and promote excellence in the broader field of early childhood education. Project Eagle impacts over 1,000 Wyandotte County children and their families each year.

In 2002, as a part of a community-wide effort to promote school readiness by providing a seamless system of services for children 0-5 and their families, Project Eagle’s Connections program was created as a universal central intake, screening, and referral program with the primary purpose of connecting families to the community services they want and need. Key features of the program include: a two-generational approach; personal, efficient, and effective services; Wyandotte County resource expertise; and a foundation of collaboration with community partners.

Research shows that early experiences can impact lifelong health. Parents have the greatest opportunity to influence these impacts. Families with complex needs benefit from community supports for developing protective factors and achieving child and family goals. Partnering with families to identify both adverse and positive childhood experiences helps guide parents to create the safest environment for themselves, their child, and their family and connecting families to appropriate parenting support encourages meaningful interactions between a parent and their child which leads to positive child outcomes now and in the future.

Over the years, families have shared their appreciation for the support our program has provided in getting them connected to the services they are seeking for their family. Participant comments include:

- “My Community Navigator explained things so well, brought a lot of information to share, and understood my needs as a parent. I am grateful for her.”
- “All the information they have on-hand is amazing. It helps narrow down who I need to call and where I need to go to meet my family’s needs.”
- “I love that I was introduced to resources I hadn’t even thought of. It was a really comfortable environment. All of my questions were answered.”

With support from the Kansas Department of Children and Families, Project Eagle recently opened the doors to our Family Resource Center (FRC). The FRC is an important expansion of the work our organization has focused on for over 30 years. Funding for our FRC allows us to create a connecting hub in Wyandotte County between and amongst families with young children and the existing networks of community resources and services, while lifting parent voice and deepening partnerships. Families are welcomed in as “members” of the FRC to promote belonging and a connection to the community.

Family Resource Centers provide a warm welcoming space for families while helping communities build a strong collaborative network to deepen their support for and between families so that children have what they need to grow into healthy, successful adults. As you consider and plan future funding, we enthusiastically encourage investment in Family Resource Centers. Family Resource Centers are tremendously valuable to families, communities, and Kansas.

Leslie Warlen
Project Eagle