



# **Testimony in Opposition to House Bill 2179**

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**Kansas House Committee on Welfare Reform**

February 9, 2022

Steve Greene on behalf of  
Opportunity Solutions Project

Chairman Averkamp, Vice-Chair Howell, and members of the committee,

My name is Steve Greene, and I represent Opportunity Solutions Project (OSP). OSP is a non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization dedicated to advancing policies that reduce barriers to work, protect state benefits for the truly needy, and ensure that the government is accountable to taxpayers and citizens.

I am glad to speak in opposition to House Bill 2179 which would remove the requirement to cooperate with child care enforcement as a condition for receiving child care subsidy. This bill moves us backward.

As the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement notes, child support collection is predicated on the idea that, “child support program(s) encourages responsible parenting, family self-sufficiency and child well-being by providing assistance in locating parents, establishing paternity, establishing, modifying and enforcing support obligations and obtaining child support for children.”<sup>1</sup>

If this bill passes, the waiting lists for these child care subsidies will grow—all while Kansas has disproportionately high child care costs. And some of the moms stuck on the waiting list will be stuck there because there are other people receiving the subsidies who aren’t cooperating with child support enforcement, who aren’t helping Kansas run a paternity test so that a support order can be put in place so that family can get the support it deserves—not from the government and Kansas taxpayer—but from the dad out there who isn’t stepping up, even though he’s required to under the law. That’s not fair to the single moms on waiting lists across Kansas.

What other states require child support cooperation as a condition of receiving child care subsidies? Our neighbors and competitors like Nebraska, Oklahoma, Texas, and Arkansas. But also Colorado, New Mexico, and New York—these states recognize that getting single moms the support they’re owed is key.

Child Support enforcement often serves as a connecting point in fostering connections between a child and their non-custodial parent. We can all agree, child support enforcement is good policy. In fact, the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement noted in a 2016 paper that, “In 2012, it is estimated that the child support program avoided \$5.2

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ocse/sbtn\\_csp\\_is\\_a\\_good\\_investment.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ocse/sbtn_csp_is_a_good_investment.pdf)

billion in public costs, more than three times the amount that is retained by the government to repay welfare costs.”<sup>2</sup>

The Opportunity Solutions Project also questions whether eliminating this good policy is actually required as a condition for receiving Child Care Subsidy. In a letter sent to the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF) by the federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF) from March of last year, DCF was given several options in which they could comply with federal regulation changes, several which do not require legislative changes.

Finally, it is difficult to understand if ACF’s Corrective Action Plan for DCF is a result of the Department’s misunderstanding of state law or federal regulations. It seems reasonable that the Department could determine cooperation or non-cooperation before issuing the Child Care Subsidy benefits. With these considerations in mind, we would urge this Committee to oppose HB 2179.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions at the appropriate time.

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ocse/sbtn\\_csp\\_is\\_a\\_good\\_investment.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ocse/sbtn_csp_is_a_good_investment.pdf).