



March 6, 2023

Chairperson Erickson and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition of SB 282. Child Care Aware of Kansas leads a network of child care resource and referral agencies working to ensure that all young children and their families have access to affordable, high-quality early care and education.

We are grateful to the authors of SB 282, the Committee, and the Kansas Legislature for your commitment to addressing Kansas' lack of affordable, high-quality child care, and we believe this goal is shared by Kansas families, child care providers, communities, and the early care and education system overall.

However, several of the provisions outlined in SB 282, while well-intentioned, will not effectively achieve our shared goals, and may in fact jeopardize the safety and well-being of infants, toddlers, and other young children across the state. Further, shifting child care regulations into Kansas code may hinder the flexibility and responsiveness of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment to evolving (and sometimes unpredictable) needs within the Kansas child care landscape as any changes would require legislative action.

In addition to this overarching concern, we would like to highlight several problematic measures within the bill:

Training and Professional Development Requirements: Lowering Our Standards

- Reducing training and professional development requirements for child care professionals undermines our efforts to ensure that Kansas children are cared for by competent, well-prepared professionals. We urge the Committee to maintain current training and professional development requirements to ensure that child care professionals are equipped to prevent and mitigate safety issues, provide high-quality early learning environments, and effectively manage their business operations.

Minimum Age of Caregivers: Children Caring for Children

- Child care is so much more than a place to leave young children while families work. The majority (90%) of brain development occurs between the ages of 0 and 5, and without mature, well-prepared professionals in place to provide early care and education, we collectively miss out on the opportunity to give young Kansans the best start possible. Entrusting the care of young children to *other children* undermines our shared goals for affordable, high-quality early care and education. We urge the Committee to maintain the current minimum age of child care



providers to ensure that children are cared for by adults with the proper training, education, and ability to navigate a variety of potentially stressful or dangerous situations.

Licensed Capacity: Over 11,000 Licensed Slots Currently Unutilized

- Increasing the licensed capacity of child care providers is not likely to achieve the desired goal of increasing access to child care for families with young children. Child care providers of all types are able to establish their “desired capacity” (the number of children they desire to care for) and this is, for the vast majority of providers, lower than their total licensed capacity. The reasons for this are often complex and depend on multiple other factors, such as staff shortages, revenue challenges, and other factors unique to individual child care providers or programs.
- Currently, Kansas has a total of 78,820 licensed child care slots statewide, yet the self-reported desired capacity for child care programs is only 67,670 slots¹ - a gap of 11,150 licensed child care slots that child care providers choose not to fill. Increasing the licensed capacity will likely result in a widened gap between licensed capacity and desired capacity, but will not necessarily result in increased child care access for children and families overall when other factors, such as labor shortages, wages and compensation, and other systemic barriers are not simultaneously addressed.
- Kansas has more family child care programs (3,247) than centers (660)², many of whom operate as sole caregivers. Child care is a challenging business with long hours and low pay. Asking child care providers to care for additional children (and reducing their required hours for training and preparation) with no additional support misplaces the burden of solving our child care challenges and has the potential to put our most vulnerable Kansans’ in danger.

Taken together, these changes pose a significant threat to the health and safety of young children while in child care. Relying on children to care for more children with less training and preparation sets Kansas back significantly in terms of safety and quality of available child care.

Child Care Aware of Kansas shares the Committee’s goals of increasing access to child care, but we are opposed to SB 282 for the reasons outlined above.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kelly Davydov

¹ Kansas State Point In Time Child Care Data, Child Care Aware of Kansas, retrieved 3/6/23

² Kansas State Point In Time Child Care Data, Child Care Aware of Kansas, retrieved 3/6/23