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TESTIMONY BEFORE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE ON SB 111 – 3/31/2011

My name is Doug Bowman, and I serve as staff to the Kansas Interagency Coordinating Council on Early Childhood Developmental Services (Kansas ICC). This testimony is being written jointly by the Special Education Advisory Council and the Kansas ICC, as a result of our recent combined meeting. Our collaborative effort to provide advice is an historic first for our two Councils. Both Councils have endorsed this testimony.

We wish to thank the Committee for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 111. First we wish to clarify that the original changes made last year (in then SB 359), in particular those pertaining to special education catastrophic aid were greatly needed and properly implemented. We applaud your efforts in that regard.

However there is a provision that is scheduled to go into effect for the upcoming 2011-2012 school year that causes us grave concern. The proposal is to calculate an average amount of categorical aid reimbursement per student enrolled. The current law then would reduce that payment of categorical aid reimbursement for school districts (or special education cooperatives) that exceed 150% of the statewide average. The bill before you (SB 111) would delay the implementation of that provision for one year.

The proposed reduction of categorical aid reimbursements serves as a strong disincentive for local school districts to serve children aged birth to three years with special needs. The funds used to serve these youngest children would be factored into these calculations, however those young children served would not be considered in the same formula.

Almost one-third of the 37 tiny-k networks (Part C of IDEA) are currently administered by a local school district or special education cooperative. All of the others (except one) access special education funding through categorical aid reimbursements arranged collaboratively with a Local Education Agency (LEA). Special education categorical aid reimbursement is in fact, the single largest source of funding for the tiny-k system. The tiny-k system has been historically underfunded, and reliant upon the collaborative efforts of our local partners. Anything which puts at risk the largest funding stream could jeopardize the entire tiny-K system

Our concern is that the implementation of that one section in the original SB 359 may disrupt these carefully constructed collaborations that often took years to establish. LEAs that find themselves at (or near) that 150% benchmark established by SB 359 will hesitate to continue supporting vital services to young children and their families.

The Special Education Advisory Council and the Kansas Interagency Coordinating Council on Early Childhood strongly advises you to pass SB 111 before the implementation next school year of the provisions we think will be harmful to Kansas children. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide this advice and assistance. I will gladly stand for questions.

• Coordinating Council on Early Childhood Developmental Services •

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Appropriations Committee

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Attachment 1