

MINUTES OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Jean Schodorf at 1:45 p.m. on March 21, 2007, in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

Committee members absent:

Committee staff present: Sharon Wenger, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Ashley Holm, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Theresa Kiernan, Revisor of Statutes
Shirley Higgins, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee: Senator Nick Jordan
Don Jordan, Secretary, Kansas Department of Social and
Rehabilitation Services
Jim Edwards, Kansas Association of School Boards
Aaron Dunkel, Deputy Secretary, Kansas Department of
Health and Environment
Abby Thorman, Greater Kansas City Community Foundation

SB 384 – Concerning early childhood education services

Theresa Kiernan, Revisor of Statutes Office, explained that **SB 384** was introduced at the request of the Senate Task Force on K-12. The bill provides that the Legislative Educational Planning Committee (LEPC), in collaboration with the 2010 Commission, study and make recommendations relating to early childhood education. The Committee and the Commission would develop a coordinated comprehensive system for delivery of early childhood services and would prepare a plan for the transfer of the powers and duties of the State Department of SRS, the Department of Education, the Department of Health and Environment, and any other state agency which administers early childhood education services to an office of early childhood education services. The plan would provide that the transfer would occur on or before January 1, 2009, and whether or not that office should be an independent office or within an existing state agency. The Committee and Commission would submit a report to the Legislature and to the Governor. The report would include recommendations for changes in the law to implement its plan and recommendation. Sections two and three require state and local agencies which provide certain services to enter into a memorandum of understanding so that there would be consistent strategies for informing parents of programs for which they are eligible and to design a universal application form that parents could use when applying for services. Section four would direct the State Board of Education to develop and implement an alternative or provisional license for preschool teachers. In Section five, the State Department of Education is directed, when they are expending new monies for early childhood education, that at least 20 percent of that money shall be targeted for community based programs that did not receive funding the prior year.

Senator Nick Jordan testified in support of **SB 384**. He noted that two members of the Senate Education Committee were on the Task Force on K-12, Senators Teichman and Vratil. He further noted that this proposal passed out of the Task Force unanimously. He went on to say that the bill was an attempt to do what several other states have already done to form an office for early childhood education services, and it is an attempt to create an umbrella organization for all of the state's early childhood programs. Creating the umbrella organization would ensure that state funds are being spent wisely and would provide support for early childhood education service programs.

Don Jordan, Secretary, Kansas Department of SRS, testified in support of **SB 384**. He noted that SRS is committed to coordination and collaboration among programs and initiatives serving young children and their families, and the bill offered the opportunity for state agencies and stakeholders to define early childhood for Kansas and to study the programs, structures, funding streams, and systems currently serving the state's young children. (Attachment 1)

Jim Edwards, Kansas Association of School Boards, testified in support of the general concepts of **SB 384**. However, KASB is concerned that item 13 pertains to possible conflicts with Article 6, Sections 2 and 5 of the Kansas Constitution. In addition, KASB feels it might be important that another agency of state government is not added into the mix, especially a new one. Furthermore, KASB questions whether Sections

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two and three of the bill get ahead of discussion by seemingly creating memorandums of understanding before the recommendations from LEPC and the 2010 Commission are known. ([Attachment 2](#))

Aaron Dunkel, Deputy Secretary, Kansas Department of Health and Environment, testified in support of **SB 384**. He requested that the Education Committee consider allowing the Department of Health and Environment to play a role in the preparation of a plan for the transfer of powers and duties of KDHE related to early childhood education services to the Office of Early Childhood Education Services. ([Attachment 3](#))

Abby Thorman, Greater Kansas City Community Foundation, testified in support of **SB 384**. She commented that, because there are 18 early childhood programs in Kansas spread over three departments with an annual investment of over \$140 million, it was worth investigating opportunities to reorganize these investments to serve children and families better. She noted that a number of states have undertaken similar reorganizations in the last five years. Although the final results have varied from state to state, each case produced one of three outcomes: the creation of a new cabinet-level department, the creation of a new office within an existing department, and memorandums of understanding between different programs and funding streams. She outlined four important lessons which were learned in studying these results. Based on the lessons learned, she made the following recommendations: (1) appoint Secretaries of SRS and KDHE, the Commissioner of Education, and Executive Director of the Children's Cabinet to a formal role in this reorganization, (2) access the resources created and the information gathered through the Comprehensive Early Childhood Systems plan and the resources gathered through the current audit of state investments in early childhood, (3) ensure there is sufficient staff support to make this planning and reorganization process happen well, and (4) involve early childhood leaders and other stakeholders when making decisions. ([Attachment 4](#))

Senator Schodorf called the Committee's attention to written testimony in support of **SB 384** submitted by Jim Redmon, Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund. ([Attachment 5](#))

Committee discussion followed to clarify the intent of provisions in the bill and the intent of the Senate Task Force on K-12. Senator Vratil explained that the Task Force concluded that one agency was needed with overall responsibility for early childhood education. The study is for the purpose of determining how to make a seamless transition because there are many invested interests in early childhood education, and in some respects they work well together and in other respects they do not work as well together. Senator Teichman explained that the Task Force discussed overlapping early education services, and it was their hope that all services could be consolidated to eliminate duplication but not take money away. In addition, the Committee discussed amending the bill to add Abby Thorman's recommendation to appoint cabinet members to a formal role in the reorganization process. Noting that the bill had two elements, Senator Schodorf suggested that Section 1 of the bill directing the two commissions to study and develop this plan be considered as a bill, and Sections 2 through 5 which included the process of developing memorandums of understanding could be considered as suggestions and recommendations that the committee study. Due to the lack of time to fully consider the bill, she continued the discussion and action on the bill to the next meeting.

Terry Forsythe, Kansas National Education Association, was scheduled to testify on **SB 384** as a neutral conferee; however, he did not present his testimony due to time limitations. Senator Schodorf called attention to copies of his written testimony which had been distributed to Committee members. ([Attachment 6](#)) She requested that Mr. Forsythe return to present his testimony at the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:25 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for March 22, 2007.