

September 26, 2023

2023 Special Committee on Child Care Centers and Child Care Homes

Dear Chairperson Erickson, Vice-chairperson Blew, and members of the Committee:

As child care providers, businesses, and community partners of child care providers, we thank you for your willingness to examine the challenges facing the child care system in Kansas.

Currently, child care providers in Kansas are struggling to keep their doors open while parents struggle to find affordable, safe, high-quality care. Unfortunately, the situation will get worse as pandemic-era support programs come to an end. Without a doubt, investments from the federal government that were directed toward the child care system helped the state avoid an economic disaster—demonstrating not only that child care providers are essential to the economy, but also that government funding for child care is necessary.

Without a strong child care system, it's difficult for parents work and for communities to recruit and retain businesses, employees, and families.

Repairing our child care system requires transformative action and an investment from government, businesses, philanthropy, and families to make child care more affordable for parents and a viable business for providers.

According to the [Economic Policy Institute](#), the average annual cost of infant care in Kansas is [\\$11,222](#) per child, or 12.1% of the state's median household income of [\\$92,890](#) for a family of four. Just 8% of Kansas families can afford infant care. The prohibitive costs of child care make it tough for parents to work and harms business' ability to recruit and retain workers.

Around 90% of brain development occurs before the age of five, making high-quality early learning a vital investment. Given its significance, it's reasonable to think high-quality child care would be widely available throughout Kansas and that providers would make a good living.

The opposite is true in Kansas. Despite the high cost for families, making child care a profitable business model is challenging. The Kansas [mean hourly wage](#) for child care workers in 2022 was \$12.29, approximately \$25,570 annually. As a result, we don't have nearly enough providers to meet our needs. No county in Kansas meets 100% of potential demand for child care. Statewide, we are meeting only 49% of potential demand.

It is a positive to see the Kansas Department of Health and Environment make progress on improving child care provider regulations. While examining licensing regulations can make a difference on the margins, it is not going to address the lack of funding within the system. We do support efforts to evaluate and restructure the child care licensing surveying system to ensure consistency and to reduce costs to providers.

Fixing the child care system will require bold, bipartisan action.

Solutions for Families

We can make child care more affordable for families by directing more resources to child care and early learning programs. We recommend increasing eligibility for child care assistance up to 450% of the federal poverty level (FPL) for family income and eliminating cost-sharing for families earning under 175% of FPL.

We recommend helping providers and parents to navigate the child care system. Specifically, we recommend paying providers directly for children enrolled in their care, just as we pay health care providers. We also recommend simplifying the enrollment process for families by eliminating unnecessary paperwork and streamlining the enrollment process, as well as utilizing presumptive eligibility for families.

In addition to eliminating harmful administrative barriers for families and providers to participate in the child care assistance program, state leaders should work with stakeholders to build a comprehensive mechanism to finance child care.

Solutions for Child Care Providers

To support providers and address workforce challenges, we recommend funding grant programs to provide bonus payments to child care workers for longevity and degree completion. We also recommend creative funding to help child care workers to obtain health insurance, such as through funding to subsidize child care workers purchasing health insurance on the market place. Likewise, we recommend exploration of how to support retirement benefits for providers.

Innovative solutions like providing grants for infants and toddlers, children with disabilities, non-traditional hour care, and other specialized circumstances would enable child care providers to expand their services. Similarly, small investments like supporting shared services across providers and bulk purchasing programs can bring down costs for providers.

Solutions for Communities

To continue to support community-based solutions, we encourage continued funding of the Child Care Accelerator grant program and support of innovative programs that reduce barriers to starting programs, like the Child Care Go Team.

There is an urgent need to build off of the bipartisan work in Kansas to address the child care challenges we face across the state. It is important that families are able to access quality affordable child care. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Signed,

The Following:

Individuals with Listed Organizations (68)

Amy Gottschamer | Lawrence, KS | Googols of Learning Child Development Center

Amy Milroy | Prairie village, KS | Britain Development - AdventHealth

Angela Lyon | Angela Lyon's Day Care Home
Ann Elliott | Pittsburg, KS | Family Resource Center, Inc
Bonnie Mitchell | Olathe, KS | Bonnie Mitchell Daycare
Bray Jermark | Abilene, KS | Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities
Brenda Bandy | Manhattan, KS | Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition
Brenda Nicholas | Olathe, KS | Brenda's Child Care
Carmen Sprague | Leavenworth, KS | Roots and Wings Academy
Carrie Carter | Basehor, KS | Dandelions and Mud Puddles Child Development Center
Charlotte Sexton | Iola, KS | Tenderheart Daycare
Christina Rose | Overland Park, KS | Happy Campers Montessori School
Crystal Henry | Merriam, KS | The Family Conservancy
Cydney Fansher | Troy, KS | The Homestead Childcare
Dale Walker | Lawrence, KS | Juniper Gardens Children's Project
David Jordan | Lawrence, KS | United Methodist Health Ministry Fund
Debra Graybeal | Topeka, KS | Lovin' Little Ones Home Child Care
Emily Barnes | Olathe, KS | Barnes Childcare
Erica Hendrickson | Erica Hendrickson Daycare Home
Hailey Russell | Oskaloosa, KS | A Child's World
Hilary Koehn | Wichita, KS | Kansas Parents as Teachers Association
Jennifer Burgardt | J2K Connections LLC
Jennifer House | Clearwater, KS | LOVE, LAUGHTER & LEARNING Childcare by Jennifer House
Jennifer Traffis | Kansas City, KS | The Family Conservancy
Jeremy Fite | Lawrence, KS | Hilltop Child Development Center
Jeremy Johnson | Pittsburg, KS | Greenbush
Jessica Lenz | Riley, KS | Country Childcare
Jessica Mueller | Clifton, KS | Little Builders
Judith Carta | Overland Park, KS | Juniper Gardens Children's Project - University of Kansas
Judy Lawson | Salina, KS | Judy Ann Lawson Daycare
Karin Juarez | Topeka, KS | Child Care Aware of Eastern Kansas
Katherine Cole Esparza | Silver Lake, KS | Creative Beginnings Daycare and Early Learning Center
Kelly Davydov | Overland Park, KS | Child Care Aware of Kansas
Kelly Frantz-Langford | Lawrence, KS | TARC
Kim Engelman | Overland Park, KS | Parent Advocate and PhD who works in Public Health
Kim Polson | Lawrence, KS | Community Children's Center
Kimberly Newton | Paola, KS | Little Lambs Daycare and Preschool
Kristina Griffee | Manhattan, KS | Child Care Aware of Eastern Kansas
Laura Miller | Howard, KS | Little Patriots

LeAnn Yantis | Olathe, KS | KidZone Learning Center
Lenora Matters | Kansas City, KS | Hillview Christian Children's Center
Lori Trupp | Overland Park, KS | Church of the Resurrection
Michelle Gilbert | Topeka, KS | Child Care Aware of Eastern Kansas
Michelle Williams | Ottawa, KS | Emerald Learning Center LLC
Monica Murnan | Pittsburg, KS | Greenbush
Natalie Kenkel | Olathe, KS | Natalie L Kenkel Daycare Home
Paula Neth | Kansas City, KS | The Family Conservancy
Paulette Brown | Olathe, KS | Pauley's Family Day Care
Penni Miller | Topeka, KS | Rainbow Treasures Day Care
Regina Asher | Shawnee, KS | Regina Asher Daycare Home
Rubiel Vacha | Frankfort, KS | Country Kidz Daycare
Sally Holley | Abilene, KS | Cornerstone Childcare Center Corp and Miss Sally
Sarah Elsen | Topeka, KS | Child Care Aware of Eastern Kansas
Shanna Steadham | Baldwin City, KS | One of a Kind
Shannon Millspaugh | Halstead, KS | Shannon's Little Superheroes
Sharon Sprague | Edgerton, KS | Sharon M. Sprague Daycare
Shawanna Lawson | Stilwell, KS | Kids Come First Child Care
Shelly Platz | Lawrence, KS | Stepping Stones, Inc.
Sherry Engelbert | Ottawa, KS | Precious Generations Licensed Home Child Care Provider
Stacie Clarkson | Independence, KS | Zion Lutheran School, Little Cubs Early Learning Center
Stephanie Vogel | Kansas City, KS | Happy Hearts Learning Center
Tabitha Southern | Garden City, KS | tabithacristy.com
Talia Juiliano | Weir, KS | Child Care Aware of Eastern Kansas
Tamara Nocks | Wiggles and Giggles Daycare
Teena Crevier | Wiggles & Giggles Daycare Home
Teresa Jones | Pittsburg, KS | TreeHouse DayCare
Ticia Brandenburg | Salina, KS | Grandma B's Daycare
Travis Rickford | Atwood, KS | LiveWell Northwest Kansas

Individuals (46)

Abbie Mcconnell
Adria Jackson | Blue Rapids, KS
Amy Bauer | Topeka, KS
Andria Devlin | Lawrence, KS
Ann Gascon | Wichita, KS
April Miller | Scott City, KS
Blair Murphy | Overland Park, KS

Catherine Shafer | Lawrence, KS
Chris Sterk Flipppo | Wichita, KS
Christi Yarnell | Topeka, KS
Clarinda O'Brien | St. Paul, KS
Dawn Flores | Pittsburg, KS
Debbie Thomas | Girard, KS
Debi Dunlap | Cunningham, KS
DeLayne Jones Hulse | Kansas City, KS
Demetria Spencer | Kansas City, KS
Dominique Lewis | Olathe, KS
Donna Doel | Topeka, KS
Esmeralda Martinez | Topeka, KS
Glenda Fowler | Independence, KS
Hannah Grow | Lawrence, KS
Heather Bone | Olathe, KS
Jamie Stafford | Topeka, KS
Janelle Dean | Wichita, KS
Jessica Cole
Kelli Roehr | Kansas City, KS
Kim Roland | Medicine Lodge, KS
Kristen Hunnicutt | Topeka, KS
Lauren Dalhaus
Leah Myers | Bourbon, KS
Lindsay Restivo
Lindsay Sayre Pederson | Lawrence, KS
Lynn Smith | Frankfort, KS
Mandy Whitworth | Chanute, KS
Maria Prieto Marcos
Misty Shrum | Eurdora, KS
Nicole Higgins | McLouth, KS
Rachelle Copeland | Kansas City, KS
Robin Wormsley
Rozie Mein
Sarah McMullen | Olathe, KS
Shelly Burnett | Kansas City, KS
Teresa Thompson | El Dorado, KS
Toriana Jacobs | Mankato, KS
Tracy Holmes | Shawnee, KS
Wendy Ramsey | Wichita, KS