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Brenda Bandy  
Executive Director, Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition  
Proponent Written-only Testimony on HB 2785  
House Committee on Commerce, Labor, and Economic Development

Chair Tarwater and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2785.

The Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition (KBC) works to improve breastfeeding support across the early childhood system. Over 90% of Kansas families choose to breastfeed. The Kansas early childhood system's support of breastfeeding is vital, not only because most Kansas families want to breastfeed but because it is critical for early brain development and optimal health outcomes. Since 2013, the KBC has trained over 5,500 childcare providers to support breastfeeding families. We have seen firsthand the dedication child care providers bring to their work caring for children.

We have also seen firsthand the complexity of the early childhood system in Kansas. Over the past ten years, the KBC has worked with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE), the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF), the Kansas Department of Education (KSDE), and the Kansas Children's Cabinet with one goal – to improve breastfeeding support in the child care setting. We learned that child care licensing at KDHE was not the only entity working with child care providers. DCF and KSDE also work with child care providers. The same three state agencies also support home visiting programs. We must work with multiple state agency staff and programs to accomplish our singular goal – to improve support for breastfeeding families in Kansas.

It is time to improve the coordination of Kansas's child care and home visiting programs. The bipartisan Early Childhood Transition Task Force recognized the need to cut red tape for families and employers. This is also needed for organizations such as ours. The KBC has worked for over ten years to integrate breastfeeding support in child care and home visiting programs. We have found navigating the various state agencies that support child care providers and home visitors to be time-consuming and confusing. Imagine how difficult it is for families and child care providers with limited time and access to state offices. The current early childhood system is too confusing, complex, and inefficient. This came through loud and clear in the bipartisan Task Force's statewide listening tour.

A unified Office on Early Childhood will help organizations like ours, state officials, and legislators work together more effectively without a significant expansion of state government. Other states around the country have unified governance, such as Missouri, North Dakota, Alabama, and Georgia. Having multiple services in the same agency will allow the agency to use data more holistically to inform policymaking. A coordinated approach improves the policymaking process and ensures that someone is responsible for addressing current gaps and overlaps in the system.

Kansas families, child care providers, home visitors, employers, and advocacy organizations welcome a "one-stop shop" for their early childhood questions. The KBC supports the Office of Early Childhood as

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**Vision** Breastfeeding/human milk feeding is normal and supported throughout Kansas.

outlined in HB 2785. The current complex system for home visiting and child care is not working. Change is needed. Strong leadership is needed. The Office of Early Childhood will provide both.

The KBC encourages this committee to vote in support of HB 2785. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this information. I am available to answer follow-up questions at [bbandy@ksbreastfeeding.org](mailto:bbandy@ksbreastfeeding.org).

Sincerely,



Brenda Bandy, IBCLC

Executive Director

Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition

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