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Kansas Action for Children
Proponent Testimony on HB 2179
House Committee on Welfare Reform

Chairman Averkamp and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2179, which would ensure compliance with federal requirements for an important program many Kansas families rely on for child care resources. Kansas Action for Children is a nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy organization working to make Kansas a place where every child has the opportunity to grow up healthy and thrive.

Child care is a critical need for families in Kansas. With more parents working outside of the home, by choice or through necessity, child care is required for these families to make ends meet. But the jobs of today rarely account for the challenges of workers with young children. Shift work, overnight job responsibilities, and unpredictable schedules make child care access and stability precarious.

The child care system struggles to meet the current needs of Kansas families, and those who can find child care often cannot afford it. That's why they need your help.

Modifications to the child care assistance program can alleviate certain pinch points for parents who are struggling to pay for child care so they can go to work.

Through HB 2179, child support cooperation would be removed as a condition to receive child care assistance. While the impact may seem small when looking at current data, this policy change will impact dozens of children – each of which is in a critical developmental window. With an average of 13 cases impacting 22 children a month being denied due to the current policy, a cumulative effect will come into play should it be removed, enabling more families to receive assistance on a consistent basis. The fiscal note for HB 2179 projects that 85 and 241¹ cases a month in FY 2024 and FY 2025, respectively, will benefit from this revision. These estimates only include numbers from DCF, not predictions about families that may choose not to apply for benefits due to child support cooperation.

¹ http://www.kslegislature.org/li/b2023_24/measures/documents/fisc_note_hb2179_00_0000.pdf



Kansas is one of few states with a child support cooperation requirement for child care assistance, which discourages families struggling to pay child care bills from pursuing these supports. Many of the families receiving child care assistance benefits who are eligible to receive child support are already cooperating with the Child Support Services program.

Those who are not currently cooperating with the program often have good reasons why it might not be in their family's best interest. Forcing parents to do so can push some into decisions they know are not best for their children and can even put families in danger. Some custodial parents may have experienced abuse by the other parent and are trying to keep their family safe, while others may have their own informal support arrangements worked out privately to suit their own family's needs. In effect, Kansas has set up an "all-or-nothing" system where parents either receive both child support and child care assistance, or they get neither.

Thank you for the opportunity to share information with you today. Feel free to reach me if you have any questions at daniel@kac.org.