



March 14, 2024

Chairperson Tarwater and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to SB96. Child Care Aware of Kansas, a network of child care resource and referral agencies working to ensure that all young children and their families have access to affordable, high-quality early care and education. Our network is on the front lines, each and every day, working to connect families to high quality child care, partner with child care providers to enhance their business and collaborate with communities to build child care capacity.

We extend our gratitude to the Committee and the Kansas Legislature for dedicating their time and commitment to addressing the issue of affordable, high-quality child care in Kansas. We firmly believe that this goal is shared by Kansas families, child care providers, communities, and the broader early care and education system.

However, several of the provisions outlined in SB96, while well-intentioned, will not effectively achieve our shared goals, and may in fact jeopardize the safety and well-being of infants, toddlers, and other young children across the state. Further, shifting child care regulations into Kansas code may hinder the flexibility and responsiveness of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment to evolving (and sometimes unpredictable) needs within the Kansas child care landscape as any changes would require legislative action.

We wish to draw attention to a few concerning aspects of the bill:

Training and Professional Development Requirements:

- Reducing the training and professional development standards for child care professionals contradicts Kansas' dedication to ensuring the safety of its children. We strongly urge the Committee to maintain the current proposed regulations requiring 16 hours of professional development, with four hours dedicated to essential subjects such as child abuse and neglect, basic child development, safe sleep practices, sudden infant death syndrome, and medication administration. Upholding these standards will ensure that child care professionals have the requisite skills to prevent and address safety issues, create enriching early learning environments, and effectively manage their duties.

Licensed Capacity:

- Merely increasing the licensed capacity of child care providers may not effectively improve access to child care for families with young children. Child care providers have the discretion to determine their "desired capacity" (the number of children they prefer to care for), which typically falls below their total licensed capacity. This difference is influenced by various factors, including staff shortages, financial limitations, and specific challenges encountered by individual providers or programs. Economic barriers, such as insufficient resources for hiring qualified early



childhood educators, also significantly impact this equation. Therefore, we encourage the Committee to maintain the current proposed KDHE regulations, which prioritize infant ratios of 1 to 3 and looks at increase child care capacity where age-appropriate, while ensuring the health and safety of children remain the primary concern.

Child Care Aware of Kansas shares the Committee's goals of increasing access to child care, but we are opposed to SB96 for the reasons outlined above.

Respectfully Submitted,
Tanya Koehn