

March 13, 2024

Annell Harmon M. S.  
Harmon & Harmon Family Childcare  
Opponent - Written  
Testimony on SB 96  
House Committee on Commerce, Labor and Economic Development

Chair Tarwater and members of the Committee:

My name is Annell Harmon. I own and operate a group child care home with my husband, Robert. I have operated my home-based child care for 34 years in Wichita. As many family child care providers will tell you there has been great enjoyment in serving Kansas children and families. However, my profession has been in crisis. The pandemic has brought this crisis to light. I do believe this is the time to address the child care challenges. I do not think that SB 96 will help the crisis. In fact, I think it will make it worse.

I have concerns with several parts of this bill. I will only address one aspect. This bill would allow one provider to care for 8 children: 4 children under the age of 12 months, 2 children 12 months to under 5 years old and 2 children 5 years old to 10 years old. My first 10 years of my child care profession I was a single provider, so I have experience with caring for children alone. For two days a week I had 3 infants (18 months and under) and 3 children (18 months and over) in my care. The rest of the week I had 2 infants and 2 older children. The two days I was at full capacity (6 under 5 years of age) I realized that I could not offer the nurturing and engaging environment I wanted for my program. This bill would add another infant in this mix, and more importantly it would change the definition of infant. An infant would be under 12 months, not the 18 months that is now allowed. There is great development that takes place for a child between 12 months and 18 months. As a single provider I practiced fire drills and found ways to evacuate 6 children (under 5 years of age) out of my child care. I cannot imagine trying to get 4 infants and 2 additional children out of a burning building.

I support your effort in trying to ease the burden on families looking to find care for their children. I sit on the Child Care Licensing Systems Improvement Team(CC-SIT). CC-SIT is a team of early childhood professionals from many programs across Kansas. CC-SIT has spent the last year working on the challenges in the child care system. CC-SIT has asked the public, parents, providers and business owners what can be done to ease the burden. The newly written regulations have been researched and evaluated by many early childhood professionals. These new regulations are in the Attorney General's office. These new regulations will be a great way for child care capacity to grow and also maintain high quality programs for Kansas children.

I am opposed to SB 96. I will be open to answering any questions.

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