

Written statement of support of Senate Bill 164
Wednesday, March 1, 2023
Senate Committee on Assessment and Taxation

On behalf of the Hutchinson/Reno County Chamber of Commerce and our 750 business and non-profit members across the region and state, I write today in support of Senate Bill 164.

In recent years, our area has become aware of the significant challenges that the lack of childcare has created. This has become an issue not only for families, but a workforce issue for our business community, as cited by businesses in our recent 2023 Business Conditions Survey. Additionally, in a series of public listening sessions held across Reno County in the fall of 2021, residents were asked to identify the top priorities facing our communities. The number one issue identified by this citizen engagement process was affordable childcare and the sustainability of the childcare system.

In early 2022, the United Way of Reno County K-Ready Coalition's Child Care Systems team commissioned Bradford Wiles, Ph.D., with K-State Research and Extension, to conduct a market study of the Reno County childcare system. The research was funded through grants from the Schmidt Foundation and contributions from the Davis Foundation and the Hutchinson Community Foundation donor advised funds. Through the research conducted in 43 in-person focus groups and over 600 surveys of families seeking childcare, center operators and family providers, many needs were identified.

One of the key findings is the shortage of childcare workers and home care providers. One reason was attributed to the inequities in pay for childcare workers and the lack of employee benefits for those providing front line care to children. Early childcare providers earn a lower median income compared with other local employers. The study cited a shortage of over 1,800 slots in Reno County alone, and recently, six more home providers have chosen to close their doors, further adding to the shortfall. The childcare system is in crisis and any measures to support workers in this sector to encourage them to remain in the industry are necessary. The full study and findings can be found at www.rallyreno.org.

The Hutch Chamber is one of several members of the Reno County Childcare Task Force and collectively our organizations ask for your support of Senate Bill 164. Thank you for your consideration.

Representing the Reno County Child Care Taskforce:
Debra Teufel- Hutchinson Chamber of Commerce
Kari Mailloux- Hutchinson Community Foundation
Denice Gilliland- United Way of Reno County
Heather Faulkner- Abundant Life Child Care and Preschool
Beth Cartlon-Child Care Links
Megan Gottschalk- Reno County Health Department

Respectfully,
Debra Teufel, President/CEO
Hutchinson/Reno County Chamber of Commerce

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