



Madame Chair and Members of the Committee,

On Behalf of the Wichita Regional Chamber of Commerce and our nearly 1,500 members, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of S.B. 282, AN ACT concerning the department of health and environment; relating to licensure of child care facilities; day care homes and child care centers; establishing license capacity and staff-to-child ratios; lowering license fees and training requirements; required age of child care center staff; creating a process for day care facility licensees to apply for temporary waiver of certain statutory requirements; authorizing the secretary to develop and operate pilot programs to increase day care facility availability and capacity.

In October of this past year the Wichita Chamber conducted its annual Legislative Survey. As part of the survey, we asked our members the question “In your experience, is access to childcare a challenge for your employees or potential hires?” We knew access to childcare was an issue, however, the results surprised even us. An astonishing 76% of the respondents replied in the affirmative.

In addition, just a week ago Tuesday, we held a childcare webinar to discuss the problem, current legislation, and other possible approaches to addressing the access to childcare dilemma. It turned out to be one of our best attended webinars with more than 100 Wichita area businesses participating. I would note that during this webinar we discussed S.B. 282. Not a single participant expressed concern with the policy changes contained.

Like so many other issues citizens look to you to solve, there is not a single or silver bullet solution to addressing access and affordability with childcare in Kansas. Last year you extended income tax credit for employer provided childcare to all business entities – not just C-Corps. There is a bill this year that would provide an income tax credit to individuals that take employment in childcare.

S.B. 282 is yet another useful approach, in this instance dealing with the regulatory burdens that are overly restrictive and that add to the problem. This legislation addresses issues with ratio requirements, staff training requirements, licensure fees and inspections. The changes contained in S.B. 282 are reasonable and do not make Kansas kids less safe, as is demonstrated by the experience of our surrounding states.

The Chamber supports S.B. 282 as it is a reasonable approach to towards addressing a problem that is keeping Kansans from seeking partial or full employment. Therefore, we request that the Committee report S.B. 282 favorable for passage.

Very truly yours,

Jason P. Watkins  
Wichita Regional Chamber of Commerce