

To: Chairman Tarwater and the House Committee on Commerce, Labor and Economic Development

From: Johnson County Board of County Commissioners

Date: February 27, 2025

Subject: Proponent with concerns for HB 2294

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of HB 2294. Employers and families in Johnson County and throughout the state of Kansas depend on a thriving early childhood system. Quality, accessible childcare is an economic development issue and one of the top priorities of the Johnson County Board of County Commissioners. Johnson County is adding thousands of jobs through generational developments like Panasonic. Ensuring access to high-quality, affordable childcare allows parents, particularly mothers, to enter and stay in the workforce.

Johnson County appreciates this bipartisan effort to unify governance of early childhood programs, cut unnecessary regulations and red tape, and increase government efficiency for early childhood programs. We particularly support:

- the expansion of the workforce pathways to becoming a provider and advancing in the profession compared to previous regulation.
- the elimination of the licensing fee and
- the creation of pilot programs for the purpose of expanding availability of childcare.

These changes reduce barriers to increasing available, quality childcare slots in our state. To further lower the cost for working families, the legislature could explore expanding the childcare income tax credit in conjunction with this effort to increase efficiencies of early childhood programming.

It's also important to share a few areas of concern that we believe warrant further discussion;

- Section 24(6)(B) deals with the triggers for needing to be a day care facility. Currently, the day care facility definition exempts those caring for one or two unrelated children for total care of 20 hours a week or less. This bill would change the exemption to those caring for four or fewer children for less than 35 hours a week. Inserting some provisions requiring background screenings and basic training, such as CPR, first aid, safe sleep practices and child development, would align these providers with best practice standards.
- Section 7(b)(1) reduces the designated area for children's activities from a minimum of 35 square feet to 28 square feet per child. The recommendation from Caring for Our Children, the National Health and Safety Performance Standards, is a minimum of 42 square feet of usable floor space per child. Crowding increases the risk of developing upper respiratory infections and increased spread of other communicable illnesses. Additionally, it increases the risk of injury, especially to younger children. We are curious what this reduction would look like in practice.

• Section 3(a)(1) reduces Child Care Providers annual professional development training from sixteen to ten clock hours. We appreciate an additional 4 hours of training for home providers who may care for more than 4 infants is required. The profession of early childhood education is and should continue to be informed by research on early childhood brain development and child development practices related to child outcomes. We want to ensure that all childcare providers have a thorough knowledge of normal child development and early childhood education, as well as knowledge of indicators that a child is not developing typically.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.