

## Testimony Regarding House Bill 2294

Commerce, Labor, and Economic Development Committee

Kansas State Legislature

February 24, 2025

Dear Members of the Commerce, Labor, and Economic Development Committee,

My name is Kim Engelman, and I am the mother of Lexie Engelman, the 13-month-old child after whom Kansas' **Lexie's Law** was named. In 2004, my beloved daughter Lexie tragically passed away from injuries sustained in a licensed family child care home in Mission, Kansas, due to a preventable lack of supervision. This heartbreaking loss shattered our family and led me to become an advocate for stronger child care regulations.

Through our efforts, **Lexie's Law** was enacted in 2010 and strengthened child care safety standards in Kansas. This law not only protects Kansas children but also inspired national changes, with similar provisions being adopted in the reauthorization of a key federal child care block grant in 2014.

As a mother who has endured this profound loss, I understand firsthand the importance of ensuring our youngest children are safe and well cared for in child care settings. This is why I am writing today to express my concerns about House Bill 2294, which proposes regulatory changes that could undermine the safety standards we fought so hard to establish.

While I support the creation of a centralized **Office of Early Childhood**, I am deeply concerned about several provisions in the bill, including:

1. **Competent Supervision:** In my reading of the bill, I understand that it proposes striking the requirement for "competent supervision" in family child care homes (FCCH). My daughter Lexie would be alive today and would be 21 years old if she had been competently supervised that day. The lack of supervision that led to her death was entirely preventable, and it is crucial that we maintain such requirements to ensure the safety and well-being of all children. Striking this requirement would undermine our efforts to prevent similar tragedies from occurring in the future. (Page 59, Lines 27-38 and Page 57, Lines 30-41).
2. **Child Care Hours:** The proposed increase in the maximum number of hours a provider can care for unrelated children—from 20 to 35 hours per week—as written, could allow up to 140 hours of care per week without licensing, which could undermine safety standards (Page 19, Lines 28-31).
3. **Training Requirements:** Reducing the required annual training hours for providers from 16 to 10 also may compromise the quality of care, particularly given national standards recommending 24 hours annually – see [Caring for Our Children section 1.4.4.1](#). (Page 6, Lines 6-9).
4. **Child-to-Teacher Ratios:** Increasing child-to-teacher ratios in FCCH, especially for infants, could negatively impact safety and development, even with the added provision of 3 infant-specific hours of professional development. HB 2294 proposes an update to child: teacher ratios to allow one provider in an FCCH to care for up to 4 infants. [Current](#)

FCCH ratios allow for up to 3 infants with a max group size of 8 children. (Page 6, Lines 18-23).

As someone who continues to fight for stronger child care protections after losing my daughter, I urge the committee to carefully consider the potential negative impact of these provisions on the safety of Kansas children. We cannot afford to roll back critical safety standards that are essential for protecting the well-being of our youngest children.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kim Engelman, PhD

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