



January 29, 2025

House K-12 Education Budget Committee

Informational Testimony Regarding SparkWheel

By: Ethan Spurling, Vice President of Policy & Government Relations

Chairman Goetz and members of the committee,

My name is Ethan Spurling and I am the Vice President of Policy & Government Relations for SparkWheel. I am fortunate to be joined by my colleagues behind me and we thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee and discuss the critical support that SparkWheel provides to the students, families, and communities we serve across Kansas.

SparkWheel is proud to be the largest provider of integrated student supports services in Kansas and the Midwest. We currently serve in **40 Kansas schools**, including early childhood centers, elementary, middle, and high schools, and now on the campus of Pittsburg State University. Additionally, we also serve students after their graduation and into their early years of adulthood. We serve **more than 22,011 students** - and the number continues to grow. We work in several Kansas communities, from Pittsburg to Dodge City and Garden City, and Topeka to El Dorado. We proudly offer a dynamic, tailored-to-fit program that respects local communities and adapts to their specific needs and values.

SparkWheel puts our staff inside schools to work alongside teachers and administrators to identify the most underserved students and helps to provide them with direct services. SparkWheel Student Support Coordinators and the SparkWheel model focus primarily on eight specific areas. These include helping to provide academic support, attendance interventions, positive behavior interventions, family engagement, future preparation, enrichment activities, life skills, and essential needs. These services help increase attendance rates, increase academic achievement, and allow teachers to focus more time on classroom instruction. Our Community Support Specialist and Success Coach positions take that work to the next level by providing services to students through and beyond their post-secondary years and by building and strengthening relationships between our program, school partners, and community stakeholders.

Currently, our funding is braided, meaning we receive a mix of public and private support. Our Development team works hard to build local relationships with partners such as United Way's, Chambers' of Commerce, the faith community, and the business community. Their support with both in-kind and financial gifts is critical to our sustainability and expansion. SparkWheel is also fortunate to receive funding from the Department of Children and Families in the form of TANF grants.