

January 29, 2025

Proponent: Elimination of the reduced-priced co-pay for Kansas kids

Dear Chairman Goetz and Members of the House K-12 Education Budget Committee:

I am writing to request that you eliminate the reduced-price co-pay on school meals as part of the 2025 budget.

My name is Brooke Kauchak (she/her) and I live in the Delano Neighborhood in Wichita, Kansas at 238 N Fern, 67203. I moved to Wichita in 2021 when we began realizing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and how families were struggling to bounce back after economic shut-downs and public health challenges. I met many individuals who were struggling to afford to buy groceries and food for their families. I am writing to encourage you to support the Governor's recommended budget which includes \$5.7 million to eliminate the reduced-price co-pay for school meals. When a child is hungry, it is impossible for them to process and learn new information; the brain requires nutrients from food to provide energy to the rest of the body. School lunch and breakfast are the meals with the highest nutritional value that many children eat each day.

I truly believe that any child who qualifies for reduced-price meals shouldn't have to pay anything for breakfast or lunch. Per the 2024 income guidelines, a family of 4 would need to make less than \$55,500 to qualify for reduced-price benefits. As a single woman living in Wichita who makes \$54k with no children, I find this extremely disheartening as the need truly exists. A little support will go a long way for Kansas families. By eliminating the co-pay, families will not need to worry about supplementing their children's meals at school and can focus their financial resources on other expenses such as housing, transportation, and healthcare.

There is still so much stigma around free/reduced school lunches and by supporting the Governor's budget, Kansas policymakers can combat this. The Kansas State Department of Education claims that "Kansas leads the world in the success of each student," however, our state is behind when it comes to expanding the number of students eligible for free lunch. In the 2022-2023 school year, Kansas had the **third lowest CEP participation rate** in the country among eligible school districts and schools. The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) allows schools and districts above a certain percentage (the identified students percentage, or ISP) of students living in poverty to provide no-cost breakfast and lunch to all students. Eliminating the reduced-price co-pay will allow students who qualify for reduced-price meals to receive them at no cost.

The most efficient and widely beneficial option is to **eliminate reduce-price co-pays** and the problem of future school meal debt, thus, eliminating the stigma about eating school meals. This would make things easier for school administrators and families, and increase the number of students getting the nutrition they need to learn and thrive. With 1 in 5 Kansas kids currently experiencing food insecurity, this would help ensure kids have access to **at least** two healthy meals each day.

I encourage you to invest in Kansas kids and eliminate the reduced-price co-pay for school meals.

Respectfully,

Brooke Evelyn Kauchak

Brooke Evelyn Kauchak
Wichita, Kansas

January 24th, 2025

Sarah Kennington, The Growing Place Childcare and Preschool
1050 Industrial Road, Humboldt, Kansas. 66748
House K-12 Education Budget Committee

Dear Chair Goetz and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Sarah Kennington from the small community in southeast Kansas called Humboldt which is in Allen County. I have worked in the early childhood field for 26 years and as a center director for the past twenty years. I have seen the need for quality care since the start of my career as a Head Start teacher in 1999. I have always worked with non-profit centers from all over the state of Kansas as far west as Garden City to as far east as Fort Scott. The need for high quality care is the same across the state. I am currently working in a center that can take care of 124 children. Which requires us to have a staff of 27 employees.

Since we are a 501(c)3 we don't expect to make money however we still have to pay our teachers a reasonable livable wage so they are able to provide high quality care that Kansas children deserve. The way we have been able to do this and keep the retention of employees is through eligible grants.

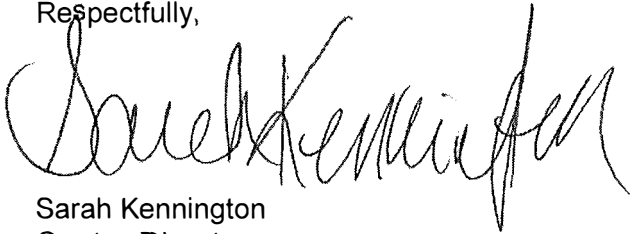
I write today to encourage you to provide \$10 million for expanding and building facilities and programs in Kansas. Our childcare center here in Humboldt is in the middle of using the last Accelerator grant that you funded. *(which we are so thankful for)* We will double in capacity which will allow us to provide 39 more slots for children ranging from birth to age 3.

The next step is to hire another 9 staff and train them. We must make sure we pay a competitive wage to get high quality applicants. This is where the grant funding comes in as it supplements the center and allows us to be able to hire the best of the best to take care of future leaders. We must all work together to make sure that Kansas children are able to get the quality care that each one of them deserves.

I know the center I work for in Humboldt is not alone. There are a few more childcare centers in the surrounding areas that I am sure will have the same financial issues and problems we do when it comes to finding reliable trustworthy staff to care for the future leaders of Kansas.

Thank you for providing the opportunity to testify on the KSDE budget and Children's Cabinet recommendations. Please reach out with any questions at growingplace.sarah@gmail.com

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sarah Kennington', written in a cursive style.

Sarah Kennington
Center Director
Humboldt Daycare Center
& Preschool Inc. DBA/ The Growing Place
1050 Industrial Road
Humboldt. Ks 66748
620-473-3955

Testimony of Dianne Kramer (Belleville, Kansas)
In Support of Funding Reduced-Price Copays

Chairman Goetz and Members of the House Committee on K-12 Education Budget:

I am writing as the grandmother of two school aged children. The kids live with my son, their father, and he receives no assistance from their mother for any of their expenses. My son works a full time job, but with the cost of his group health insurance, brings home a very small amount of money.

My grandchildren started this school year on reduced lunches, so between my son and I, we had to come up with the extra money. The youngest, a kindergarten student, gets milk in the afternoon, which is an additional 50 cents. While my grand kids have recently been switched to free lunches, I know that the extra money is a big deal for many other families.

I urge you to find funding for free lunches for all students who meet the poverty guidelines, removing the co-pay entirely. Especially elementary students really need the nutrition program as their brains are still growing and there is so much to learn!

Thank you.

Dianne Kramer.

Testimony of Lynnette Krieger-Zook, Buhler, Kansas
In Support of Funding Reduced-Price Copays

Chairman Goetz and Members of the House Committee on K-12 Education Budget:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of funding the reduced-price copay in the budget. I want to share my personal experience with the issue of school meals and why I strongly support including funding reduced-price copays in the state's budget.

I am a retired teacher of 31 years in both Sedgwick and Reno County. For 9 years I was also a single full-time working mother who struggled to feed my two children and support them on a limited budget. As a director of a daycare, I brought home day care leftovers to stretch our food budget. Children should not go hungry because their family is surviving on a low income. While 70 cents a day for a reduced meal may not seem like much; two children can cost a family around \$30 dollars a month. Only when you have lived counting each item at the grocery store so that you can also afford clothing, rent and utilities can you understand how \$30 a month can create a crisis and significant family stress even as food prices increase.

As a public-school teacher, I saw how the children in my class were aware of the food scarcity in their own home. They would pocket food from lunch, ask for extra and put it in their backpack to take home to a younger sibling. Hunger and concern where your next meal is coming impede children from reaching their full physical, cognitive and emotional development. This is noted in learning loss, trauma and difficulty in focusing and attending to daily schoolwork.

Tragically statistics show that child hunger has increased in Kansas. According to Kansas Action for Children, a Topeka-based nonprofit, 2022 saw the highest spike in food insecurity among children in the past decade.

I would ask that you consider how this budget proposal offers targeted relief to families who have already been identified as low income. I ask that you consider the needs of the children and ask you to fund this budget item.

Thank you for allowing me to support this proposal today.

Lynnette Krieger-Zook
Reno County, KS
kriegzook@gmail.com

**Testimony of John Lara, Wichita, KS
In Support of Funding Reduced-Price Copays**

Chairman Goetz and members of the House Committee on K-12 Education Budget:

Hello, my name is John Lara and I'm a 67-year-old resident of Kansas. I want to share my personal experience and express my strong support for funding Reduced-Price Copays in the state's budget.

As a father of five, my wife and I were fortunate enough to send our children through K-12 education without worrying about how we'd put food on the table. However, many families in Kansas struggle with this basic need.

Looking back, I realize that providing nutritious food is only one piece of the puzzle when it came to supporting the well-being of my children. With financial constraints and limited resources, many families must make difficult choices between adequate shelter, healthy food, health care, and a good education. I know some families struggle with these basic needs. That's why I believe it's essential to recognize the fundamental importance of food in our lives. Nutrition played a crucial role in the development of my five dyslexic children. It is remarkable to me how significantly nutrition can help children achieve their full potential.

When children are hungry, it can have devastating effects on their ability to learn. Hunger can lead to decreased concentration, difficulty remembering new information, and even affect their mood and behavior. By providing financial assistance to families who need it most, we can ensure that every child in Kansas has the opportunity to thrive, regardless of their circumstances.

I urge the committee to prioritize funding for Reduced-Price Copays in the state budget. It's a critical step towards ensuring that every Kansas child has access to nutritious food, regardless of their family's financial situation.

I'm grateful for the opportunity to convey my position on this proposal.

John

Testimony of Kelm Lear to Kansas House Committee on K-12 Budget

In Support of Funding Reduced-Price Copays

My name is Kelm Lear. I am a concurrent student at Kansas State University where I will graduate in May with a B.S. in political science, a B.S. in American Ethnic Studies, and a master's in public administration. Although there is substantial quantitative evidence that justifies why Kansas should eliminate the reduced school meal copay, I want to begin this testimony with a personal anecdote.

Before attending K-State, I was a student in Unified School District 501 (USD 501) in Topeka. My family was fortunate enough to afford the full price of school meals for my brother and me, but we were in the minority. When I attended USD 501, the overwhelming majority of students qualified for free and reduced meal prices. At the time, I was too young to identify the signs of food insecurity. But I remember the sounds of my friends' rumbling stomachs while taking a test; students asking teachers if they had any snacks in their classrooms; and the special lunch line for kids who got an Uncrustable sandwich with a cheese stick while the rest of us dined on chicken nuggets, mashed potatoes, mixed fruit, and a dinner roll- a cafeteria classic.

Today I recognize these events as clear signs of food insecurity and I see that eliminating the reduced meal copay is an effective way to erase these experiences from our schools. Approximately 130,000 Kansas children are food insecure, and one in five do not know where their next meal is coming from (Kansas Appleseed, 2024).

Eliminating the reduced meal copay would ensure that 37,000 Kansas students receive the nourishment they need to grow up healthy (Rankin, 2024; Kansas Appleseed, 2024; Kansas Appleseed, 2023; Cohen et al., 2021). In addition to improving childrens' physical health, expanding free access to school meals is an investment in their mental well-being. With no families left unable to afford school breakfast or lunch, their children won't have to face the shame of being served an alternative meal or nothing at all (Kansas Appleseed, 2023; Bentley et al., 2022). Fully fed students also exhibit higher levels of cognitive function, which narrows gaps in academic performance across socioeconomic groups, and elevates the overall performance of schools on standardized tests (Schwartz & Rothbart, 2020; USDA, 2024; Cohen et al., 2021).

Furthermore, expanded access to free meals provides financial benefits to school districts, working-class families, and local economies. Eliminating the copay reduces school meal debt, enabling districts to spend funding on other necessities; food waste and unit meal costs decrease; and, the current three-tiered school meal payment system would turn into a two-tiered system, reducing administrative expenses (Bentley et al., 2022). Benefiting families may also enjoy more discretionary income, which they can spend in the local economy and on providing food at home (Cohen et al., 2021).

Lastly, ending child hunger in our schools is a non-partisan endeavor. Fifteen states of all partisan stripes have eliminated the copay for breakfast, lunch, or both (No Kid Hungry, 2023). They recognized that solving child hunger is too important to let partisanship get in the way. I hope Kansas reaches the same conclusion and acts accordingly.

In short, eliminating the copay is a low-cost, high-reward investment in the health and academic success of Kansas students. For the sake of our kids and the future of this state, let's get this done.

Sincerely, Kelm Lear

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United Way of Kaw Valley

TOPEKA OFFICE
1527 SW FAIRLAWN
TOPEKA, KS 66604

LAWRENCE OFFICE
1127 IOWA
LAWRENCE, KS 66044

785.273.4408
UWKAWVALLEY.ORG

January 27, 2025

Jessica Lehnherr
President & CEO, United Way of Kaw Valley
Written-Only Testimony on the KSDE Budget
House Committee on K-12 Education Budget

Chairman Goetz and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of funding the reduced-price copay in the budget.

United Way of Kaw Valley serves a four-county region – Shawnee, Douglas, Jackson, and Jefferson – in northeast Kansas. We work with cross-sector partners and donors to create an unbreakable network of support for strong and healthy communities.

We strongly support funding the reduced-price copay for the thousands of eligible families across our service area. We hear from our partners regularly about the economic strain on working families. Many of them rely on school lunches as a means for ensuring their children have adequate food access. This means that they have more money in their family budgets to pay for housing, healthcare expenses, transportation, and the many unexpected expenses that come up.

We know that access to food is essential to a child's educational outcomes. Recent data indicates that nearly 1 in 5 children in our communities are food insecure. In classrooms in our largest area school districts, we know the number is much higher. Food insecure children are more likely to miss school and perform poorly in their classes. **The importance of supporting school-based meal programs cannot be overstated. The state's investment in the reduced-price copay ensures more kids have access to food and are more prepared to learn.**

We understand the importance of ensuring we are investing our state dollars wisely. We believe fully funding this budget item is key to our kids' success and a necessary support to low-income Kansas families.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our support and testimony with you today. Should you have questions, please contact me at jlehnherr@uwkawvalley.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jessica Lehnherr". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Jessica Lehnherr
President & CEO, United Way of Kaw Valley

Testimony of Nick Levendofsky
Executive Director - Kansas Farmers Union
McPherson, Kansas
In Support of Funding Reduced-Price Copays

Chairman Goetz and Members of the House Committee on K-12 Education Budget:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of funding the reduced-price co-pay in the budget.

Kansas Farmers Union's grassroots 2025 Policy Statement reads: "*We support policies moving toward universal no-cost meals for all Kansas public school children.*"

Rural schools are the lifeblood of many communities across the state, and if passed, this budget item could positively impact many rural students and their families.

Many students, especially those from low-income families, struggle with hunger and food insecurity, which can make it difficult for them to concentrate in class and learn effectively. Too many families still struggle to put food on their tables.

For many parents, the meals provided at school are a critical part of our children's diet. But even paying for the reduced-price copay can be a struggle for some parents. While it might not seem like a lot of money to many, finding 70 cents extra every day for the co-pay is a struggle, especially when grocery bills keep getting higher.

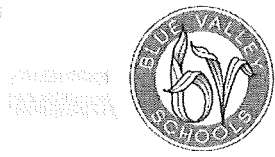
This budget proposal offers targeted relief to families who have already been identified as low income. We urge you to fund this budget line item so the families who need a hand up can get it.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our support for this important budget issue.

Sincerely,



Nick Le
Executive Director
Kansas Farmers Union



BLUE VALLEY SCHOOLS

House K-12 Education Budget Committee
Proponent Testimony (Written Only) KSDE Budget Request
January 28, 2025
Submitted by: Dr. Tonya Merrigan, Superintendent
Email: tmerrigan@bluevalleyk12.org

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these written comments in support of **the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) budget proposal**. We support this budget, continued funding for SPED excess costs, as well as the Governor's request for an appropriation of \$500,000 to pay for AP tests for all students.

Blue Valley has a student population of more than 22,400 and consistently ranks in the top tier of high performing schools, both in the state and in the nation. (See "Quick Facts" at the end of testimony.)

The primary goal of the Blue Valley district is **to ensure every student attending our schools has the educational programming and opportunities, delivered by quality educators, to allow them to thrive long after they leave our doors**. We embrace every student who walks through our doors and always work to provide them with the tools to succeed.

This is especially true of our commitment to our students with a special education individual education plan (IEP). More than 19%, or 1 in 5, of Blue Valley students receive SPED services. While Blue Valley's total enrollment has increased by less than 1% since 2020, we have experienced 10% growth in disability IEPs since 2020.

The Blue Valley School District recoups 62% of its special education excess costs when state law prescribes a 92% rate. Last year, this resulted in \$13.7M diverted from our general funds to cover these costs. We appreciate the legislature's commitment to SPED funding in the budget approved during the 2024 session. We are already seeing a positive impact of the funding on our SPED programs. It is our understanding that the legislature would need to continue to fund SPED at this level for the next four years to achieve the prescribed 92% rate.

As a final thought, we want to express our appreciation to this committee for its work toward improved student learning in Kansas. We are committed to continuing to work with the committee toward that end.

USD 229 Blue Valley Schools: Quick Facts

K-12 Student Enrollment	21,767	ACT District Composite Average*	22.9
Early Childhood—grade 12 Enrollment	22,450	ACT Statewide Average	19.2
Average Daily Attendance	94.4%	SAT District Average	1357
Graduation Rate	96.7%	SAT Statewide Average	1256
Teacher's with Master's Degree or Higher	76%	*with 91.6 % of graduates taking the ACT	

Testimony of Sharon Miller, Lawrence KS

In Support of Funding Reduced-Price Copays

Chairman Goetz and Members of the House Committee on K-12 Education Budget:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony supporting funding the reduced-price copay in the budget. I want to share why I strongly support including funding reduced-price copays in the state's budget.

As you know, the economy still isn't great in our state and too many families struggle to put food on their tables. For many parents, the meals provided at school are a critical part of our children's diet. However, even paying for the reduced-price copay can be a struggle for some parents. While it might not seem like a lot of money, finding 70 cents extra every day for the copay is a struggle, especially when grocery bills keep increasing.

I volunteer with those experiencing chronic homelessness. I now call many friends while listening. I have learned —most experienced food insecurity as children living with families struggling to make ends meet. Instead of sitting in school hungry, suppose those children ate lunch. Would they be where they are today? Let's ensure children receive a school lunch where they can concentrate and learn, graduate from high school, and maybe even attend college on academic scholarships. Getting good jobs supporting their families.

This budget proposal offers targeted relief to families who have already been identified as low-income. I urge you to fund this budget line item so the families needing extra help can get it. Building a stronger Kansas.

Thank you for allowing me to support this proposal today.

Sharon Miller
825 Coving Drive
Lawrence, KS. 66049
913-707-9042

Written Testimony of Samantha Neill, Buhler, Kansas
In Support of Funding Reduced-Price Copays

Chairman Goetz and Members of the House Committee on K-12 Education Budget:

I am writing testimony in support of funding reduced-priced copays in the Kansas budget. I want to share my experience with this and include why I support this funding.

I have been a public school teacher for 22 years. Approximately 15 years ago, I started our "blessing box" and "clothing closet" to help meet the needs of our students. Even in a district that has a reputation of wealthy students, I have found that is simply not the case.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, all students' lunches were covered by ESSER funding. My school counselors and I were shocked at how little we had to stock the food in our school blessing boxes. Kids were being fed - there was no discrimination between whether they had the money to eat or not. They found comfort in knowing that two warm meals a day would always be provided. In a sense, this leveled the learning "playing field" for these students who are often food-insecure.

Fast forward to the past 2 years, and now that lunches are not covered, we are seeing a much higher traffic at our local blessing boxes. While there are programs like "Backpack for Kids" this doesn't apply to high school students unless we can prove they have younger siblings. It is assumed that since these kids are older, they have more means to locate food. But the truth is that many are still food-insecure.

By funding reduce-priced copays, we will help Kansas parents who are working hard to make ends meet. We will help students who come to school to learn, but also because of the resources we provide.

I would ask you to consider funding reduce-priced copays. Someday I hope we can fund breakfast and lunches for all students. When students are full, they can learn. When students are hungry, their focus is not on learning, but surviving until their next meal.

Respectfully,
Samantha Neill
2018 Kansas Teacher of the Year
Buhler, KS



The Children's Campus of Kansas City
444 Minnesota Avenue, Suite 200
Kansas City, KS 66101
P 913.342.1110
F 913.342.3632
www.thefamilyconservancy.org

January 27, 2025

Paula Neth, President & CEO
The Family Conservancy
Written-Only Testimony on the KSDE Budget
House K-12 Education Budget Committee

Chair Goetz and members of the Committee:

I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on the Kansas Department of Education's (KSDE) fiscal year 2026 budget on behalf of The Family Conservancy (TFC). I am Paula Neth, President & CEO of TFC – a nonprofit agency designed to help children take advantage of the most critical period of human development by improving early learning environments and equipping parents and caregivers to make the most of the time they spend with young children.

There are two items in particular within KSDE's proposed budget that we would highlight for the committee's consideration. First, KSDE seeks \$2.9 million to support Tier I reimbursement for family child care providers participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). This is an incredibly important program both for child care providers and the young children in their care, offsetting the cost of providing nutritious meals and snacks at a time when the cost of groceries continues to soar.

As part of pandemic relief, the federal Keep Kids Fed Act enabled all family child care providers to receive reimbursement at the Tier I rate. However, that relief expired on July 1, 2023 with family child care providers reverting back to the lower Tier II rate. There has been a steep drop in family child care participation since tiering (also known as a means test) was implemented in 1997 and the number of family child care homes has decreased over time. As a local sponsor of the CACFP program, we wholeheartedly support the reinstatement of family child care providers to the Tier I reimbursement rate.

Second, we urge the committee to support \$10 million in funding for Child Care Capacity Accelerator grants. These grants have been instrumental in supporting communities and business leaders as they work to create local solutions to local child care challenges. The Family Conservancy is currently engaged in supporting nine businesses in Wyandotte County that are exploring options to invest in child care solutions for the families in our community. These funds would provide crucial opportunities for these businesses – and our entire community – to expand the supply of high-quality early childhood care and education.

We ask that you support funding for these elements of KSDE's fiscal year 2026 budget proposal. Thank you for your time and consideration, and I would be glad to engage in dialog around this topic (pneth@thefamilyconservancy.org).

Sincerely,

Paula Neth

Helping Children. Strengthening Families.



President & CEO
Cell: 720.837.3402



The Children's Campus of Kansas City
444 Minnesota Avenue, Suite 200
Kansas City, KS 66101
P: 913.342.1110
F: 913.342.3602
www.thefamilyconservancy.org

Helping Children. Strengthening Families.





January 29, 2025

Adrienne Olejnik
Vice President, Kansas Action for Children
Written-Only Testimony on the KSDE Budget
House Committee on K-12 Education Budget

Chairman Goetz and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on several key items in the budgets for the Kansas State Department for Education (KSDE) and the Children's Initiatives Fund (CIF). KAC is a nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy organization working to make Kansas a place where every child has the opportunity to grow up healthy and thrive. KAC does not receive any funding from local, state, or federal government sources; however, we have a keen interest in the state budget because of its impact on children and families.

We understand the Legislature's desire to minimize budget enhancements and instead identify cuts in the state budget this year. Yet, we believe the best investments of state resources are those made on behalf of children and families. For these reasons, we ask that you prioritize the needs of the youngest Kansans during your budget deliberations, even when it requires additional funding.

The KSDE budget includes several important investments that Kansas Action for Children strongly supports.

Ease the Burden on Families Paying for Reduced-Price School Lunches

Kansas should join the 15 other states¹ that have covered the cost of the reduced-price lunch co-pay for Kansas children. According to the most recent *2024 Kansas KIDS COUNT® Data Book*², food insecurity for children has increased to 19.1%, meaning nearly 1 in 5 Kansas kids lack confidence about the availability and quality of their next meal. No Kansas county was spared from food insecurity, with an increase in the number of food insecure children in every one of Kansas' 105 counties.

While the cost of a reduced-price meal may seem insignificant to some, the cost of school meals to families adds up quickly and can easily cycle into school meal debt, causing even more problems for families who are struggling to make ends meet.

We request you add \$5.5 million State General Fund (SGF) dollars to cover the co-pay cost for eligible children's reduced-price meals for FY 2026. By allocating these dollars, you'll make a difference in the lives of roughly 36,000 children by ensuring meals at school are readily available.³

¹ Kansas Appleseed. (2025). *Feeding Kansas Kids*.

² Kansas Action for Children. (October 2024). *2024 Kansas KIDS COUNT® Data Book*.

³ Kansas Appleseed. (2025). *Feeding Kansas Kids*.

Increase Special Education State Aid

We appreciate the Legislature's action in the 2024 Legislative Session to increase the state aid for excess special education costs. Because of the increase, the state is making notable progress toward achieving the required 92% of excess costs funding level. Phasing in additional dollars should be continued for FY 2026. The Governor's budget includes \$87.6 million SGF as part of a three-year plan to achieve the 92% goal. **We request you again prioritize at least \$75 million additional SGF dollars to the state aid for special education for FY 2026.**

Improve Child and Adult Care Food Program Reimbursement Rates

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is a federal program that provides reimbursements for nutritious meals and snacks to eligible children and adults enrolled for care at participating child care centers, day care homes, and adult day care centers.⁴ While CACFP is a useful program, significant paperwork and other compliance measures are required for participation. Current Tier 2 reimbursement rates are so low that they don't justify the time spent to participate in the program.

We request the state add funding to ensure all CACFP-enrolled and licensed child care provider participants are reimbursed at the Tier 1 rate, which would incentivize participation in the program, providing financial mitigation of overhead costs. Some providers are not currently eligible for the Tier 1 rate. This policy recommendation was reviewed and approved by the 2023 Kansas Special Committee on Child Care Centers and Child Care Homes but has not moved forward in the Legislature. **Estimates are \$2.9 million will be needed to move Tier 2 reimbursement rates to Tier 1 levels for those currently enrolled.**

Restore the Children's Initiatives Fund Budget

Kansas made a strategic decision decades ago by dedicating its Master Tobacco Settlement (MTS) dollars to the creation and ongoing use of the Kansas Endowment for Youth (KEY) Fund and Children's Initiatives Fund (CIF). The annual MTS payment fluctuates and has generally declined over time. Coupled with additional expenditures taken from the CIF to pay for other state services, we are at a critical point in its future.

Transfers from the KEY Fund and CIF deplete the promise that funds will be available over the long term for Kansas kids. Currently, funds are redirected to the Office of the Attorney General, the Kansas Department of Revenue, the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF), the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE), and the Kansas State Department of Education. While most of these transfers cover worthy program expenditures, the KEY Fund and CIF have been used as a ready source of revenue during tough economic times.

The Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund recommended that two specific transfers from the CIF are redirected out of the fund and are instead covered by SGF dollars: \$1.1 million to DCF for the child care workforce registry and \$1.3 million to KDHE for child care health and safety grants. Last year, the Legislature added both of these line items to the CIF against the recommendation they be funded with State General Fund dollars.

We request you work with other legislative budget committees to remove these expenditures, totaling \$2.4 million, from the CIF budget and move them into the DCF and KDHE budgets with SGF dollars. By removing these expenditures from the CIF and maintaining them through SGF dollars, the CIF

⁴ USDA Food and Nutrition Service. (n.d.). *Child and Adult Care Food Program*. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp>

will have a stronger fiscal outlook to maintain the early childhood block grant dollars and invest in early literacy services so Kansas children are more prepared to enter the K-12 system.

Continue Child Care Infrastructure Investments

Investments in child care over the past several years have kept child care entrepreneurs in business, parents able to maintain careers, and children in safe and nurturing learning environments. Thousands of new child care slots have been created and thousands more maintained. One of the key tools recently used to improve the Kansas child care system are child care accelerator grants. **We ask the Legislature to add \$10 million SGF to continue the work to build and renovate child care facilities across Kansas.** While this money would fall under the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund, it is imperative the funds come from SGF and not further burden the Children's Initiatives Fund.

Thank you for the opportunity to share these priorities with you today. Feel free to reach me if you have any questions at adrienne@kac.org.

January 29, 2025

Proponent: Elimination of the reduced-priced co-pay for Kansas kids

Dear Chairman Goetz and Members of the House K-12 Education Budget Committee:

I am writing to request that you eliminate the reduced-price co-pay on school meals as part of the 2025 budget.

I am writing as a Manhattan resident who cares about increasing food access to K-12 students and thereby supporting student success.

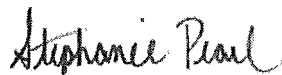
Eliminating the reduced-price co-pay for school meals would:

- Help 36,000 Kansas have access to a healthy breakfast and lunch at their school.
- Expand access to school meals. Students who participate in school meals benefit from improved health outcomes, better test scores, fewer school absences, and fewer behavioral referrals.
- Provide targeted financial relief for Kansas families who are struggling with rising costs of groceries.

This is especially important here in Riley County where the child food insecurity rate is more than 20%.

I encourage you to invest in Kansas kids and eliminate the reduced-price co-pay for school meals.

Respectfully,



Stephanie Pearl
Manhattan, KS



Eileen Horn <ehorn@kchealthykids.org>

Testimony

1 message

Lacy O'Malley <lacy.omalley1@gmail.com>

Mon, Jan 27, 2025 at 8:47 AM

To: "ehorn@kchealthykids.org" <ehorn@kchealthykids.org>

Dear KS Legislators,

As a former reduced price lunch student, and current Kansas taxpayer, the proposal to eliminate the cost for reduced priced lunches is an excellent idea to reduce the stigma associated with being poor as a kid.

I support this measure, especially in Southeast Kansas, but statewide. I live in Crawford county KS in Pittsburg and I hate the fact that one in four kids in my son's class might not have full bellies on the weekends. That breaks my heart.

Additionally, I'm in an organization that fundraises to pay off school lunch fees. That money could be used for buying bikes for kids or other things the government can't do. This measure is one thing the govt can do to help the children in our state.

Thank you,

Lacy O'Malley

920 E 5th St, Pittsburg, KS 66762