

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
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