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DATE: March 10, 2026
TO: Senate Committee on Ways & Means
**FROM: Andrea Eliot, Child Care Branch Director, Greater Wichita YMCA;
Chair, Kansas State Alliance of YMCAs Child Care Task Force**
RE: Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 513

Chairman Billinger and Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means:

My name is Andrea Eliot. I serve as the Child Care Branch Director for the Greater Wichita YMCA and as Chair of the Kansas State Alliance of YMCAs Child Care Task Force — a statewide group made up of YMCA child care directors from across Kansas. On behalf of the Kansas State Alliance of YMCAs, I am pleased to provide testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 513.

The Kansas State Alliance of YMCAs is comprised of 9 YMCA associations operating in 23 communities across the state. As the largest child care provider in Kansas, our YMCAs served over 14,000 children in 2025 through early learning programs, before and afterschool programs, and summer camps. A significant number of the children we serve come from families who rely on the Child Care Subsidy Program to afford quality care.

SB 513 directs the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF), in coordination with the Kansas Office of Early Childhood (KOEC), to develop, procure, and implement a modern child care subsidy management and payment system capable of supporting direct-to-provider payments. This legislation addresses a structural problem that our YMCA child care directors encounter every single day: the current subsidy payment system is unnecessarily burdensome for providers, confusing for families, and a barrier to broader participation in the program.

As child care directors, we see firsthand how the current payment structure creates friction at every step. Under the existing system, child care providers are effectively the middleman — with no direct authority or control over the state's contracted payment system. We can only refer families back to DCF when they encounter problems navigating payment and transfer processes. For multi-site programs like the Y, the challenges compound: many of our locations require families to use a phone or online transfer system because the cost of renting dedicated card machines and paying per-transaction fees is simply too high.

From our YMCA child care directors across Kansas, we consistently hear:

- DCF funds are often not accessible to families until after services have already been provided, forcing programs to either absorb the financial risk of serving children without payment or requiring families to pay weeks of fees out of pocket in advance.
- Parents are frequently confused about their subsidy rate and inadvertently overpay. This triggers a time-consuming cycle of refund processing and credits that diverts staff attention from children and families.
- Providers must independently track subsidy eligibility, co-pays, and parent payments that vary greatly from family to family, with no consistency or centralized system to support that work.
- Delayed or missed payments create direct cash-flow challenges, making it harder for programs to maintain staffing, sustain quality, and plan for the future.

The administrative burden extends to families as well. Many parents — particularly those with low incomes who are working long hours or managing multiple jobs — struggle with the complexity of DCF office hours, application requirements, and subsidy transfer processes. In too many cases, families simply give up. Providers, meanwhile, are asked to hold spaces for children for a month to six weeks while eligibility is processed — a request that strains even the most mission-driven programs like ours.

A 2024 Health Fund/K-State survey found that 71% of child care providers would be more likely to participate in the subsidy program if they could receive payments directly from the state. That finding reflects what we hear from our Kansas YMCA child care directors every day. When payments are predictable, timely, and transparent, programs can build sustainable business models, retain qualified staff, and focus their energy on what matters most: the children.

Direct-to-provider payments would fundamentally change that equation. Providers would no longer carry the financial risk of the state's payment processes. Families would no longer need to navigate complex EBT transfers or worry that a missed payment puts their child's enrollment at risk. And programs like ours — which operate on thin margins with a mission to serve all families regardless of ability to pay — would have the financial stability to grow and serve more children.

We appreciate that SB 513 does not mandate an overnight transformation and instead would follow a phased implementation once funded. The modern system envisioned in this bill — with a provider portal, integration with state eligibility and licensing systems, secure communication tools, and help desk support — is exactly what Kansas child care providers need. It would allow providers and the state to track payments in one place, manage records more efficiently, verify eligibility quickly, and reduce the administrative overhead that currently consumes so much staff time on both sides.

Less administrative overhead means more time focused on program quality and engagement with children and families. Financial stability for child care programs means reduced cash-flow problems, better workforce retention, and stronger, more sustainable business models. That is good for providers. It is good for families. And it is good for Kansas.

We offer our support for Senate Bill 513 with one important caveat. As DCF and KOEC move through the RFI and RFP process, we strongly encourage the state to engage child care providers — including large, multi-site operators like the Y — as active partners in system design. At the heart of that design must be a clear recognition that child care providers are the service providers in this equation — we deliver the care, employ the workforce, and help drive the Kansas economy — and that timely payment for services rendered is not a courtesy but an obligation the system owes us, just as it owes access and affordability to the families we serve. Critically, the new system must support flexible payment timing — including prepayment options — so that modernization delivers genuine financial stability for providers, not just a different set of cash-flow risks. Kansas YMCAs are eager to contribute our on-the-ground experience to the RFP process to help ensure the new system works for providers of all sizes across the state.

Kansas YMCAs have long been champions of policies that strengthen the child care workforce and expand access to quality care for working families. SB 513 represents exactly the kind of forward-thinking, responsible modernization that our child care system needs. We urge the Committee's support of Senate Bill 513.

Thank you for your consideration.