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Paula Neth, President and CEO
Written-Only Proponent Testimony for SB 513
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Chair Billinger and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of SB 513, which puts Kansas on a clear path to modernizing the Child Care Assistance Program through the development of a streamlined child care subsidy management and payment system that supports direct-to-provider payments.

Reliable child care is essential to Kansas' workforce and economy, yet families and child care providers continue to face avoidable challenges navigating the Child Care Assistance Program. Currently, only about **40 percent of licensed child care providers participate in the subsidy program**, often citing administrative burden and difficulty collecting payments as major deterrents. When providers choose not to participate, families who rely on assistance have fewer options for safe and reliable care.

Futures First works alongside families, early educators, and community partners to expand access to safe, nurturing, and high-quality early learning opportunities. Through this work, we see firsthand how critical stable child care systems are for family stability, children's development, and parents' ability to participate in the workforce.

SB 513 takes an important step toward addressing these challenges by directing the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF), in coordination with the Kansas Office of Early Childhood (KOEK), to assess and develop a modern child care subsidy management and payment system. The bill establishes a coordinated process that begins with a Request for Information and a comprehensive legislative report before moving toward procurement and implementation.

This deliberate approach allows Kansas to gather key information on system functionality, costs, timelines, and best practices from other states. It ensures the state can make thoughtful, cost-effective decisions before investing in long-term system changes.

Modernizing the system to support direct-to-provider payments would improve payment reliability, reduce administrative burden, and make participation in the Child Care Assistance Program more feasible for providers. Strengthening this infrastructure ultimately benefits families, child care providers, and Kansas employers alike.

When child care systems work well, parents can work, businesses can grow, and children gain the strong early learning foundation that shapes their futures. SB 513 is a responsible step toward building a stronger, more reliable child care system for Kansas families.

Thank you for your consideration of SB 513. If I can be of further assistance, please feel free to contact me at pneth@futuresfirstkc.org.

Sincerely,

Paula Neth