



March 6, 2024

Debra Teufel, Member  
Reno County Child Care Task Force  
Verbal Proponent Testimony for HB 2785  
House Committee on Commerce, Labor and Economic Development

Chairman Tarwater and members of the Committee:

I stand before you today as a representative of the Reno County Child Care Task Force, a dedicated group working tirelessly to enhance the child care landscape in our county. Our mission is clear: to forge systematic, sustainable, and equitable child care solutions that uplift our providers, parents, and the business community at large.

Today, I wish to express our wholehearted support for HB 2785, a pivotal piece of legislation that promises to streamline and unify early childhood programs under the Office of Early Childhood (OEC). This bill is not merely legislative text; it's a beacon of hope for families grappling with the scarcity of quality child care, a guidepost for providers navigating a maze of inefficiency, and a blueprint for a system where data empowers rather than encumbers.

### **1. Easing the Strain on Families with Young Children**

In Reno County, we've seen firsthand the struggles of families in dire need of child care—where availability is a rare commodity. The current system, fragmented and convoluted, does little to alleviate this strain. By consolidating under the OEC, HB 2785 offers a path to simplification, ensuring families can access the care they so desperately need without unnecessary hurdles. This is not just an operational improvement; it's a lifeline for working parents and a stabilizing force for our local economies.

### **2. Enhancing System Efficiency Tied to Funding**

The inconsistency of funding streams has placed our providers in uncertain positions, often straddling the line between financial viability and operational collapse. This uncertainty trickles down, leaving parents in a lurch and, by extension, impacting our workforce and employers. HB 2785's push towards unification under the OEC is a clarion call for efficiency—a promise of consistent funding that can bolster the backbone of our child care system, ensuring that providers can focus on quality care rather than financial survival.



### **3. Streamlining Data to Empower Providers**

Our work in Reno County has illuminated the transformative power of streamlined data. The duplication of data entry is not just a nuisance; it's a barrier to quality. By fostering an environment where data is shared seamlessly among providers and related industries, HB 2785 paves the way for more successful programs. This isn't merely about reducing administrative burdens; it's about reallocating precious resources—time, energy, focus—towards what truly matters: the well-being and development of our children.

In conclusion, the enactment of HB 2785 represents a critical step towards a future where our child care system is not just functional but flourishing. On behalf of the Reno County Child Care Task Force, I urge this committee to recognize the profound impact this bill will have on our families, providers, and communities. Let us unify, streamline, and empower—let us pass HB 2785 for the future of our children and the health of our community.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony in support of HB 2785, which unifies many early childhood programs and services under the Office of Early Childhood.

If I can be of further assistance, please contact me at [debrat@hutchchamber.com](mailto:debrat@hutchchamber.com) or 620-662-3391.