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Don Hineman, Chair
Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund
Proponent Written-Only Testimony on HB 2785

House Committee on Commerce, Labor and Economic Development

Chairman Tarwater and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2785. My wife's forty-year career as an early childhood educator instilled in me a deep appreciation for the importance of early childhood programs. In fact, it was her dedication and passion for early childhood which prompted me to accept the position of Chair of the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund.

As Kansans, we can be proud of the multi-pronged approach to early childhood support and education which is currently in place. However, the system is due for an overhaul to deliver needed services to Kansas families more effectively. Currently, families with young children face a bewildering array of state agencies as they search for the assistance they need. Providers of childcare and early education face frustrations and delay as they struggle to deal with multiple state agencies. And staff within those agencies must operate within a fragmented system which contains inherent inefficiencies that blunt their efforts to make a difference for Kansas families.

HB 2785 represents a much-needed opportunity to change the present system for the better. By consolidating current early childhood programs within a single entity, the ability of Kansas families to access needed services will be enhanced. Local communities and the providers of early childhood services will find their interactions with state government to be simplified and streamlined. And Kansas taxpayers will be assured that program accountability has been strengthened and public dollars are spent in a more efficient manner.

Not a single new program would be created by HB 2785. Rather, many existing early childhood programs will be made more effective by the consolidation and streamlining of administration made possible by this bill.

I applaud the work performed by the bipartisan Early Childhood Task Force and I stand in strong support of HB 2785. Should anyone wish to contact me for deeper conversation on the subject, my email is don@hinemanfarms.com