



Testimony by Leadell Ediger
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Chairman Masterson, and members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide written testimony today. I appreciate the opportunity to express our opposition to proposed changes to the funding structure of early childhood programs in Kansas.

My name is Leadell Ediger and I am the Executive Director, of Child Care Aware® of Kansas. We are the state network that supports four child care resource and referral agencies who serve all 105 counties in Kansas. We are in a unique position within communities to work with families, child care providers as well as state and local governments to strengthen the quality of child care. We do this by:

- Ensuring that families have access to affordable, high-quality child care across the state, through child care referrals and consumer education.
- Supporting child care providers including assistance with starting and operating a child care business, on-going professional development and training both in person and on-line classes, and information and support about how to make quality improvements that positively impact the children in their care.
- We network with employers and community partners to provide information about family/friendly policies, programs that benefit employees, and how to support the development of high-quality child care programs in their communities.

The Governor's budget recommendation proposed eliminating the Kansas Endowment for Youth (KEY) Fund and the Children's Initiative Fund (CIF) funded with tobacco settlement money which supported critical early childhood programs. The recommendation calls for transferring \$57.3 million from the KEY Fund to the State General Fund (SGF) instead of to the CIF for Fiscal Year 2017. Permanently funding CIF programs from the SGF would dismantle one of Kansas' most innovative, successful, forward-thinking legacies. We believe this proposed change will make children's programs more susceptible to budget cuts and sweeps, eliminating existing protections for Kansas' youngest citizens.

Currently the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund, a bipartisan, quasi-governmental agency, ensures accountable investment in children's programs. Amending this funding structure removes a long-standing, successful system of checks and balances within the early learning system. This is echoed by Governor Brownback's commissioned efficiency study, which indicated that CIF programs are held to a higher standard of evidence based practice than many other state programs.

Thank you for your consideration and support.