



February 2, 2016

Testimony: Senate Bill 389
Scott Hall, Vice President for Strategic Initiatives
Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce
Senate Ways and Means Committee

Chairman Masterson and members of the Committee,

The Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce (KC Chamber) appreciates the opportunity to express our opposition to the proposed changes to the funding structure of early childhood programs in Kansas.

The mission of the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce is to make our community the best place to live, work, and start and grow a business. To advance this mission, the KC Chamber developed its Big 5 initiatives – five big ideas to elevate our region onto the world stage. These community-based projects take advantage of the area’s world-class organizations and the spirit of our citizens to inspire innovation in our region.

One of the Big 5 ideas is building Kansas City’s workforce of tomorrow through kindergarten readiness. We see the need for high-quality early childhood education as the first building block necessary to create a strong workforce, but also as a road to opportunity for those at all incomes levels in our community. One need only read the results of the seminal article on this subject “The Early Catastrophe”, co-authored at the University of Kansas, to be convinced.

The Governor’s budget recommendation proposes re-directing funding for critical early childhood programs that will help kids become kindergarten ready. The recommendation calls for transferring \$57.3 million from the KEY Fund to the State General Fund (SGF) instead of to the Children’s Initiative Fund (CIF) for Fiscal Year 2017. The KC Chamber sees this move as dangerous for children in our region by making children’s programs more susceptible to budget cuts, sweeps, diversions and eliminating existing protections for Kansas’ youngest citizens.

One thing is clear to us at the KC Chamber: no single issue impacts the vitality of our regional community and our regional workforce more than education.

For these reasons, we ask that committee members oppose changes to the funding structure of the KEY Fund and the CIF.

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