



Written Testimony of
Melissa Colbern M.D.
Executive/Medical Director of
Mary's Choices (Pregnancy Resource Center)
In support of
SB 498

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 498. I am Melissa Colbern, Executive and Medical Director of Mary's Choices, a Pregnancy Resource Center in Topeka. Mary's Choices has served over 2,600 women since opening our doors in 2012.

Over the past few years, Mary's Choices has experienced decreasing donations as our donors have fewer financial means with our current economy. Mary's Choices has also experienced increasing expenses as our programs have tripled in size over the last 3 years as we serve more mothers in need.

Seventy-five percent of Mary's Choices' donations are from private donors. I believe these donors would be more likely to increase their donations if their donations would provide them with tax credits.

At Mary's Choices, our mission is to support women with unplanned pregnancies. We provide counseling by medical professionals and provide information about the mother's options: parenting, adoption, and abortion. We perform free pregnancy tests and ultrasounds. We also aid the mothers with scheduling obstetrical care, applying for a medical card and food aid, and helping with other needs the mother may have. Mary's Choices will become a Presumptive Eligibility portal later this month for these mothers, making their process of applying for medical care even easier.

Mary's Choices administers an Earn While You Learn program that provides educational videos, companionship, and material support to women. Mothers may take part in our program through pregnancy and until their baby is two years old. The mothers watch one educational video monthly and receive a box of baby supplies for each child under two. The average value of this box is \$182. 110 mothers and 131 babies actively took part in our program in 2023.

Our Earn While You Learn program has grown from nineteen moms monthly participating in 2019 to 70 moms currently participating in our program. This program provides parenting education and material support to help moms raise loved, wanted children.

In 2023, Mary's Choices provided \$73,000 in baby supplies which included 1,928 packs of diapers, 910 packs of baby wipes, 2750 baby outfits, 1,265 hygiene products, and 367 new books.

Due to our growing number of mothers needing support, we are requiring more baby supplies than ever before. Mary's Choices purchases over 60% of our baby supplies.

Based on our 2023 expenses, Mary's Choices would have saved \$10,800 if we were sales-tax exempt. Based on our current statistics, this would have provided fifty-nine more baby boxes for the mothers we support.

SB 498 would provide extra financial support for Mary's Choices through sales tax exemption and increased donations from individuals as they take advantage of tax credits.

Please vote to support SB 498 which will help support Mary's Choices' mission:

Supporting Life, inside the Womb and Out