

**Senate Committee on Commerce**

**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 282**

**Presented by Eric Stafford, Vice President of Government Affairs**

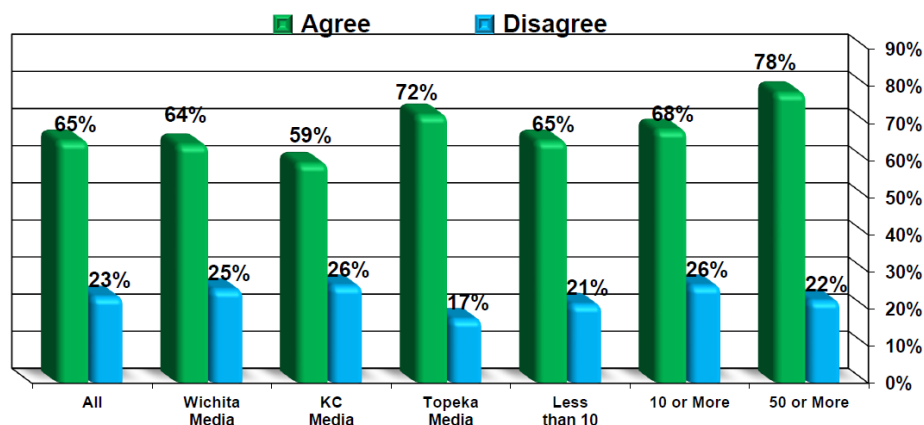
**Wednesday, March 8, 2023**

Madam Chair and members of the committee, my name is Eric Stafford, Vice President of Government Affairs for the Kansas Chamber. The Kansas Chamber represents small, medium and large businesses of all industry segments across the state. We appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 282, which makes several key changes to the state’s childcare standards to increase capacity, increase revenue for facilities to increase pay for employees and reduce costs to families who are struggling with the high cost of childcare.

The lack of access to quality, affordable childcare in Kansas has become an area of focus for the legislature. Just last year, the legislature expanded access to the tax credit available for businesses that invest in facilities for employees. After last session, we started hearing more from our members expressing concerns about the lack of access to childcare for employees. That prompted us to host a Zoom meeting with representatives from KDHE on their efforts to address this crisis. We also started asking questions in our annual CEO poll of business leaders across the state.

**Childcare Keeps Kansans Out of Workforce?**

65% Agree; 23% Disagree; 12% Undecided



In our November survey, we asked if business leaders felt access to childcare was keeping Kansans out of the workforce. 65% of the 300 business owners surveyed answered yes. Kansas has some of the most restrictive provider/child ratios in the country. SB 282 takes steps to increase those ratios modestly to try to balance the importance of both child safety and

increased access. SB 282 if passed would also allow 14- and 16-year-olds to work in the classroom under direct supervision allowing facilities to expand their pool of possible employees, although 16-year olds can work independently as long as there are no infants in the room.

This committee has held numerous hearings on the workforce challenges facing our state and industries. SB 282 is a responsible and important step to addressing the needs of both employees and employers and we respectfully ask for your support. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 282, and I am happy to answer any questions at the appropriate time.