



Kansas Association for the Education of Young Children

March 5, 2023

Senate Committee on Commerce

Chairperson Renee Erickson and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for taking the time to hear testimony regarding SB 282. I am providing written comments on behalf of the Kansas Association for the Education of Young Children (KSAEYC) with opposition for this bill. KSAEYC is the state affiliate of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and our mission is to promote high quality learning experiences for children birth through age 8.

Kansas is at a pivotal moment to help increase the capacity for child care through unique opportunities and federal assistance. Components in this legislation will put Kansas out of compliance with federal requirements, putting funding and Kansas children at risk. The legislation will in turn, take away pilot opportunities that are currently in place to assist rural communities facing child care staffing and capacity challenges.

Increasing licensee capacity will not necessarily correspond to an increase in available child care slots. Regulations such as staff to child ratios and maximum group capacity, ensure adequate supervision and interaction with children to keep them safe and engaged in learning. In fact, many Kansas providers may not choose to increase their "desired capacity", which is the number of children a provider wishes to have in their care. Rather than asking existing providers, who are already overworked and underpaid, to take additional children, more work must be done to get additional workers into the child care field so the number of child care slots are increased across Kansas.

This legislation is unnecessary and is not being requested by the child care community or child care advocates. The current child care regulations provide important safety protections for children and uphold the quality of early education and care. By reducing child care training requirements, this bill jeopardizes Kansas children and provider's safety. Having properly trained and licensed child care staff is essential to ensuring providers can effectively help children in their care in case of an emergency.

Kansas communities and businesses will be harmed by removing KDHE's authority to issue Policy Exemptions and reintroduces barriers to the workforce that state agencies have already eliminated. This bill puts outdated practices that are harmful to Kansas into stature. This bill does not solve the childcare crisis we are facing, but instead puts our most vulnerable population at risk.

Thank you to the Committee on Commerce for taking the time to read KSAEYC's testimony in opposition of SB 282. Please do not hesitate to reach out if we can answer any questions or provide additional information to the Committee on this matter.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tristen Cope". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tristen Cope, KSAEYC President