

Written Opponent Testimony SB 282 Senate Commerce Committee

Please accept this testimony as my strong opposition to SB 282. As an advocate for Kansas kids since 1988, I find this bill alarming, confusing, and, if passed, downright dangerous. There is very little about the Kansas system of regulating child care that I haven't been involved in---I ran a large child care center for infants to school-aged children, I have helped others start and maintain child care facilities, and I have worked with state agencies to understand what child care looks like in rural areas. Through these experiences, I can say definitively that there is nothing in this bill that would address the access issue Kansans (and all Americans) are facing.

I commend the authors for trying to help raise the issue of access to child care, but this bill doesn't meet the mark. Increased ratios are not the answer. Ratios are in place for safety and to ensure staff has the appropriate time to care for and educate kids. I ran one of the largest child care centers in the state for 15 years, and I would never use the ratios listed in the bill, especially the increase in ratios for infants and toddlers. Making training and educational requirements less rigorous for staff moves our state backward and, quite frankly, is insulting to those folks who have worked hard to run a quality business and increase their skills.

Finally, let's face it, no one likes regulations, but there are reasons for most of them. I had my fair share of "conversations" with local regulators while I was running a child care facility. Sure, there are interpretation issues, but I've found that most can be worked out, and all are intended to keep kids safe. There is a system in place for disputes, exceptions, and public input. This bill takes that away and, I think, puts the systems in the arms of the Kansas Legislature. Having been a member of that body, I can't see how that's a good idea.... there are three branches of government for a reason.

Thank you for thinking about improving child care access and quality in Kansas. Please help improve both access and quality in Kansas by supporting efforts to bring federal money into Kansas that improves the wages of staff working directly in child care. Please make child care for poor families more easily accessible by decreasing unnecessary regulations for getting child care assistance from DCF. Please support the efforts of local groups trying to improve access to child care by providing consistent funding for facilities and daily operations that are based on good business practices and best practices in caring for kids.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Monica Murnan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.