

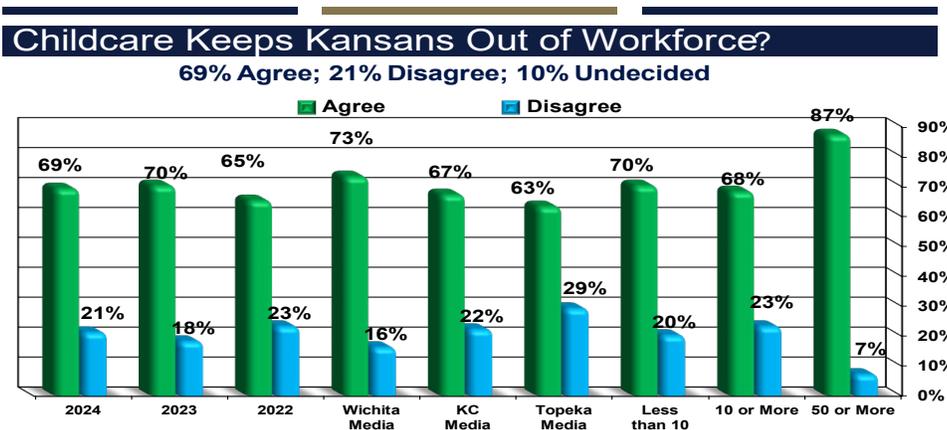
House Committee on Commerce, Labor, & Economic Development
Proponent Testimony on House Bill 2294
Presented by William Wilk, Senior Director of Government Affairs

Thursday, February 27, 2025

Mister Chair and members of the committee, my name is William Wilk, Senior Director of Government Affairs for the Kansas Chamber. The Kansas Chamber represents small, medium, and large-sized businesses across the state advocating for policies to improve the economic climate in Kansas. The Kansas Chamber appreciates the opportunity to submit proponent testimony on House Bill 2294, a bill focusing on childcare reform.

House Bill 2294 is a comprehensive reform package to address the critical need of childcare in our state. This bill would reduce licensing fees and training requirements for childcare facilities. This bill would also create a temporary waiver of certain statutory requirements. Additionally, this bill creates pilot programs to increase the accessibility and availability of childcare facilities for Kansas families.

The lack of access to quality, affordable childcare in Kansas has been an issue of concern to the business community. This issue has also become an area of focus for the legislature. We applaud the efforts of the legislature expanding the access to the tax credit available for businesses that invest in facilities for employees. After the 2022 session, we started hearing more from our members expressing concerns about the lack of access to childcare for employees. This prompted us in 2022 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.



These remain strong numbers. This is particularly important to larger companies and those in Wichita.



In our November CEO survey from 2024, we asked if business leaders felt access to childcare was keeping Kansans out of the workforce. 69% of the 300 business owners surveyed answered yes.

This legislation includes several great aspects to increase the accessibility of childcare services. One point we would like to highlight is on page 19 New Section 24 (a) (6) (B) line 28: *“Day care facility” does not include an individual who provides care for less than 35 hours per week to four or fewer children, not more than two infants, who are not related to the individual by blood, marriage or legal adoption.*”

If parents can have access to someone who could be recognized in this category, such as a neighbor or family friend, why not have the hours be 40 hours what the average work week is or why even have a cap on the number of hours. Parents will ultimately decide what is best for their children and this one piece of restriction could cause difficulties if their children need care more than 35 hours a week.

In closing, the Kansas Chamber supports any reasonable deregulation of childcare facilities when it comes to the accessibility of childcare facilities while not sacrificing the safety of children. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 2294, and I am happy to answer any questions you might have at the appropriate time.