



INDEPENDENCE
INCLUSION
INNOVATION

700 SW Jackson St., Suite 1100
Topeka, KS 66603
p: 785.235.5103
f: 785.235.0020
e: interhab@interhab.org

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**TO: Sen. Ty Masterson, Chair, and
Members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee**

FR: Tom Laing, Executive Director, InterHab

RE: Opposition to proposal to move the “tiny-K” program to KDHE

InterHab opposes the GBR recommendation to move “tiny-K” (the Part C program for children at risk of long term disabling conditions) from KDHE to the Department of Education. The distinctions between the mission of the public schools and the mission of “tiny-K” are significant.

The services offered by “tiny-K” are not primarily educational services, but instead are to identify and ameliorate the effects of potentially disabling conditions facing a child and the child’s family. Providers of health care, special therapeutic services, family training and other social services specific to a child’s disability interact to assure that each child has a chance for success when they enter into the programs offered by the public school systems.

- Public schools are child-centered, tiny-K is family centered (because for those early years, from birth until age three, the family not the public school system is the primary support for the child).
- Public schools are facility-based, tiny-K is home and community based. Schools have historically been designed to educate children in public school settings while tiny-K is designed to provide services in the most suitable setting, including age-appropriate child care, or in the child’s home.
- Public schools are too often insulated from the community’s larger service sector, but the tiny-K program is intended to attract local services and local resources to the same table in the community to problem-solve and meet the special disability-related needs of infants and toddlers.
- Public schools are heavily financed not just with State financing but with local levy authority, while tiny-K is financed by a variety of local resources which assist in assuring that the needs of each child can be addressed. Those “tiny-K” programs currently operated by local school districts historically have less financial support from the broad network of community stakeholders.

For these practical and programmatic reasons, “tiny-K” should not be enveloped within the state’s educational bureaucracy.

In addition to the question as to why non-school programs should be placed under Department of Education school-based guidelines, we should also consider this profoundly challenging policy question:

Should our public school system become the exclusive service and governance authority for children, from the time they are born until the time they become adults? We think not, and we urge you to not support expanding the mission of the public schools to include the infant and toddler program.

The relocation of tiny-K has been proposed multiple times in the past twenty years, and each time the legislature has not agreed with that recommendation. The above reasons are among the many reasons why this has not happened in the past and should not happen this year as well.