

United Way of Greater Kansas City

801 West 47th Street
Kansas City, Missouri 64112
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February 2, 2016

To: Chairman Masterson and members of Senate Ways and Means Committee

Re: Support for Children's Initiatives Fund & Kansas Endowment for Youth

From: Kelly Carnago

UWGKC Chair, Education Impact Council

Brent Stewart

UWGKC President & CEO

The United Way of Greater Kansas City (UWGKC) thanks you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of retaining Kansas's existing funding streams for early childhood programs: Children's Initiatives Fund (CIF) and Kansas Endowment for Youth (KEY).

UWGKC urges the Kansas Legislature to continue its dedicated funding streams for early childhood by keeping the KEY fund in place, and then transferring funding to the CIF each year to support a strong, accountable range of early childhood programs. Doing so protects this critical funding which currently benefits 200,000 Kansas children. Quite simply, UWGKC does not support the Governor's proposal to eliminate both CIF and the KEY Fund. CIF and KEY Fund best serve children and families by remaining as they are currently designed to support and supplement state dollars through careful accountability and monitoring as required by current law.

UWGKC is one of the largest funders of child and youth development programs in the Kansas City region. As such, we are committed to doing our part to provide children and families with needed resources so children receive the developmental opportunities they need to thrive. We recognize, however, that adequate support requires a multi-pronged, public/private partnership if we are going to maintain meaningful supports for young children and their families. Kansas CIF funding is an essential component of that public/private partnership for early childhood.

CIF investments, like that of UWGKC's, in particular benefit some of the most vulnerable children and families in the state of Kansas. In an era when poverty levels have not significantly improved since the Great Recession and 1:5 young children (ages 0 to 5) in the Kansas City region remain in poverty, it is vital to protect resources which support vulnerable children and families.

We are also keenly aware of the role of early childhood in laying the foundation for our children to be tomorrow's skilled workforce. Investment in early child development is a proven strategy for preparing children to succeed in school. Brain science stresses the cumulative nature of the

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UWGKC, Page 2 of 2

brain's development. In addition, research links school performance measures such as high school graduation with school readiness. It is clear – a safe, quality early learning environment creates the foundation for future school and adult success. We urge the Kansas Legislature to continue to invest CIF funds to programs serving children prenatal to age five. CIF's strong investment in early learning is a robust workforce development strategy for the future.

With the United Way of Greater Kansas City, we urge the Kansas Legislature to protect CIF funding for the good of all citizens of the State of Kansas. Thank you for your attention to this important issue.