

February 3, 2016

Chairman Ryckman and Members of the House Appropriations Committee:

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Kansas Parents as Teachers Association. KPATA is a 501(c)(3) organization working with all 66 Kansas Affiliate Programs serving 11,077 children in 8,771 families.

For 26 years, Kansas Parents as Teachers has served parents with children prenatal to 3 years of age. Using educational and family well-being models to support parents, effective home visiting helps prevent negative family and child outcomes. A two generational program, PAT partners with parents, guardians, grandparents, mothers and fathers, and foster parents as their child's first and most important teachers, resulting in thriving families and children who are healthy, safe, and ready to learn. PAT has four interrelated components: personal visits, group connections, screenings, and resource connections. Using a research informed curriculum, certified parent educators emphasize parent-child interaction, development-centered parenting (child development) and family well-being to optimize children's early learning, building on family strengths, identifying goals, and monitoring child progress. Educators connect families with community services and resources, referring when needed to reduce the need for remediation which is more costly in later years.

Local PAT programs are participating in data collection with the Parents as Teachers National Center and the Kansas State Department of Education. The national data is collected to ensure that programs are replicating the PAT model the way it is intended in order to get strong outcomes. Local programs also collect data and report it to KSDE. This data has been collected for the past three years and permits long term evaluation. We will be able to follow PAT children from kindergarten through high school graduation, providing the longitudinal data needed to support the effectiveness of Parents as Teachers in Kansas.

FY 2015 KSDE data indicates that families are strengthened in family functioning, concrete supports, knowing what to do as a parent and knowing how to help their child learn. The data also indicates that 96% of the children enrolled in Parents as Teachers are on target for language, communication, and physical and social emotional development. Children who are not on target are referred to other community services such as Infant and Toddler Services, Tiny k.

All PAT programs are required to offer developmental and health screening for children enrolled in the program. On a visit a parent educator noticed that the child had an asterisk in the middle of the pupil. From training she knew this could indicate a tumor in the eye and had to be addressed immediately. The parent educator observed the child for most of the visit and then brought up the issue with parents. They agreed that they too had noticed that eye looking different but didn't think much about it and they would call their doctor. Later that the day the child was rushed to the hospital where the eye and a fast growing tumor were removed. The doctors reported that if the tumor had not been removed the child would have died. This is a very dramatic result of Parents as Teachers screening and through these screenings issues are discovered every day that affect the child's learning and later school success.

An important emphasis for PAT is to serve first time parents while pregnant or with a newborn. Beginning PAT near birth is ideal as research indicates that parents need to be in the program at least 2 years to receive optimal benefits. Therefore many of our parents are young and launching their lives with all of the extra expenses of a new baby. Some of the young families are not low income, yet have new careers, are working parents, have child care expenses, may be mobile without the support of family and friends, and may have medical bills. These families have very little disposable

Senate Ways and Means Committee

Date: 02-03-2016

Attachment #: 1

income and paying for another service is out of their reach. PAT is a primary prevention program so starting Parents as Teachers with families early prevents issues, and strengthens and supports families.

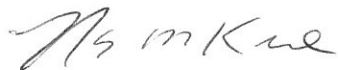
Currently Parents as Teachers is funded with Children's Initiative Funds allowing services to all, including 27% low income families in FY 2015. CIF funding permits local Parents as Teachers programs to reflect the demographics of their communities and target or "means test" families based on family needs such as mental health, parent and/or child with disabilities, low education, and isolated families in rural areas, etc. The 2017 budget is recommending that Parents as Teachers funding be switched from Children's Initiative funds to TANF funds. TANF funds would only allow programs to enroll families with low incomes, 200% below poverty. Parents earning over 200% would be financially means tested on their income and local programs would have to implement a sliding fee scale charging parents for PAT services. Since this is something school districts have not been doing, it will take funding to determine policies and infrastructure so programs can ask parents for income verification, determine who should pay and who should not, charge the fees, and bill and collect the fees. An increase in PAT funding has not occurred since 2008, and an increase is not in the budget for this coming year, the policy and infrastructure would make it necessary to decrease the number of families served to pay the costs. Kansas Parents as Teachers Association is in agreement that Parents as Teachers be administered by Kansas State Department of Education and urge you to change the funding to the Children's Initiative Funds in lieu of TANF funding. The baby's brain is most vulnerable prenatal through age 3 and PAT needs to have funding for all children during this period of life.

These CIF funds are not only important to Parents as Teachers they are important to all of our Kansas early childhood programs. These funds were designated for early childhood programs and continuing these funds are critical for all of our young children and their families.

Research has shown that the early years in a child's life – when the human brain is forming – represent a critically important window of opportunity to develop a child's full potential and shape key academic, social, and cognitive skills that determine a child's success in school and in life.

Thank you so much for allowing this testimony today.

Sincerely,



Nancy Keel, Executive Director
Kansas Parents as Teachers Association
913-271-3353