

June 23, 2016

Annie McKay, President & CEO
Kansas Action for Children
Testimony for House Bill 2001 and Senate Bill 1

Thank you Senator Masterson and Representative Ryckman. My name is Annie McKay, and I am the president and CEO of Kansas Action for Children (KAC). KAC appreciates the opportunity to express our opposition to further reductions to early learning funding and changes to the Children's Cabinet authority. Decades ago, Kansas lawmakers made a commitment to the state's future prosperity by establishing the Kansas Endowment for Youth (KEY) Fund and the Children's Initiatives Fund (CIF) with tobacco settlement money. KAC opposes the proposal to reduce CIF funding for the CIF-funded pre-K pilot program and replace it with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) dollars because it further reduces the funding set aside for Kansas' young children.

This proposal runs counter to our shared goal of providing an equitable education to all Kansas children. The CIF administers programs to support the most vulnerable, economically fragile children in every Kansas county. These programs ensure that all Kansas kids receive the best possible start in life - no matter what. That is also the driving need behind equalization – to ensure all kids receive equal opportunity to achieve their potential in a public school classroom. Further eroding the CIF would rob lifelines for Kansas' youngest kids during their most critical years of life, then leave them on the doorstep of public schools, behind before they even get a chance to start. An equalized school funding formula has little impact if we deny our state's youngest children the support they need to enter Kindergarten ready to learn.

We are deeply appreciative of the support the Legislature demonstrated for Kansas kids during the regular session when you repeatedly opposed efforts to weaken or eliminate the CIF. With these consequences in mind, we hope you will maintain your commitment to our state's youngest citizens by rejecting any attempts to reduce CIF funding during the special session.

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