



Testimony by Leadell Ediger
Executive Director
Child Care Aware® of Kansas
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Thank you for the opportunity to provide supportive testimony for the proposed “Soar” Act. My name is Leadell Ediger, I am the Executive Director of Child Care Aware® of Kansas. We are the state network that supports four child care resource and referral agencies who serve all 105 counties in Kansas. We are in a unique position within communities to work with families, child care providers as well as state and local governments to strengthen the quality of child care. We do this by:

- Ensuring that families have access to affordable, high-quality child care across the state, through child care referrals and consumer education.
- Supporting child care providers including assistance with starting and operating a child care business, on-going professional development and training both in person and on-line classes, and information and support about how to make quality improvements that positively impact the children in their care.
- Networking with employers and community partners to provide information about family/friendly policies, programs that benefit employees, and how to support the development of high-quality child care programs in their communities.

Before first grade, a child may spend over 10,000 hours in child care. Research tells us that children enrolled in a good early education program during the first five years of life are most likely to be in a highly skilled job or in college at age 21. **Child care fills an important need - when families have access to high-quality child care, parents can go to work, employers fill jobs, and children enter school ready to learn.** High-quality early care and education programs can have a profound and lasting impact on young children. The impacts include both academic gains and increased self-regulation and social skills that make learning possible.

Since 2007, the childhood poverty rate in Kansas increased from 15% to 17%. Ten years ago, Kansas had 100,000 poor kids and in 2015 that number jumped to 122,000 – a 22 percent increase. **It is imperative that low-income families have access to child care assistance so that they can pursue the necessary training and education to better their life circumstances. At the same time their children are receiving the care and education through a nurturing child care environment -- in essence cultivating a two-generational approach to reducing poverty.** The “Soar” Act will ensure that more Kansas families can access child care assistance so that they can work and pursue higher education. This would be a win for Kansas, the families that call Kansas home and their young children.

Senate Public Health and Welfare

Date 2.7.17

Attachment 5