

February 9, 2017

Amanda Gress, Director of Government Relations
Kansas Action for Children
Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 126
Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee

Chair Schmidt and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for considering Senate Bill 126, which will ensure greater safety for Kansas children in child care. Kansas Action for Children's vision is to make Kansas the best state to raise a child, and our organization shapes health, education, and economic policies that benefit Kansas children and their families. Advancing improvements to Kansas child care, including the passage of the landmark Lexie's Law legislation in 2010, is an important component of our work to ensure every Kansas child receives the best possible start in life. Senate Bill 126 will build on existing child care policies to reduce the risk of abuse and neglect to children in child care.

Conducting comprehensive background checks on individuals who work in child care facilities ensures greater safety for Kansas children. Senate Bill 126 expands the background check requirements for persons who reside, work, or regularly volunteer at a Kansas child care facility. This legislation strengthens provisions of our state law intended to protect Kansas children in regulated child care. Under current law, Kansas disqualifies any person who has been convicted of a crime that is classified as a person felony or who is listed on the Kansas child abuse and neglect registry. Senate Bill 126 **expands** that check to disqualify any person who has been convicted or adjudicated of a crime that requires registration as a sex offender or who is listed on any other state or federal child abuse and neglect registry.

This legislation brings Kansas into compliance with the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant, which is a major source of funding for child care services in the state. In 2014, Congress passed a bipartisan reauthorization of the federal child care legislation, creating the opportunity for states to reexamine and improve their child care licensing policies. Updating the Kansas statute for background checks is an important step to ensure Kansas will continue to receive federal funding for the state's child care infrastructure and the child care assistance program for working families.

Kansas Action for Children supports Senate Bill 126 to protect Kansas children in child care. The 2010 passage of Lexie's Law established Kansas as a national leader in health and safety standards for our child care facilities. Senate Bill 126 builds on these protections to reduce the likelihood that an individual prohibited in another state would have access to children in Kansas child care facilities. As this Committee works to address child care policy, please do not hesitate to contact Kansas Action for Children by emailing me (amanda@kac.org) if we can answer questions or otherwise be of assistance.



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