



Testimony by Leadell Ediger
Executive Director
Child Care Aware® of Kansas
February 9, 2017

Thank you for the opportunity to provide supportive testimony of Senate Bill 126. My name is Leadell Ediger, and 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 serving all 105 counties in Kansas. We are in a unique position within communities to work with families, child care providers, and state and local governments to strengthen the quality of child care. We do this by:

- Ensuring 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 with both in-person and on-line classes, and information and support about how to improve the quality of child 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 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. **One basic tenant of high-quality care and education is a foundation of safety standards set by government.** This process started at the federal level with the reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant, which gave states the opportunity to update child care policies.

Children's safety while in child care settings must be a high priority for all of Kansans! That safety includes hand washing, diapering, communicable disease control, playground safety, intruder precautions, emergency preparedness, and the list could go on. **It makes good sense to start by ensuring that the individuals residing, working, and volunteering within a child care facility have comprehensive background checks to confirm parents can leave their children with individuals who meet or exceed their expectation for their child's health and welfare.**

Child Care Aware® of Kansas stands ready and willing to support the implementation of the comprehensive background check procedures that will be required of child care providers statewide. Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 126 to help ensure the safety of Kansas children in child care.