
Testimony of Barry Downing, President of Northrock, Inc.

Employer Child Care Tax Credit
Senate Ways and Means Committee [or House Tax Committee or other?]
February 21, 2020

“Chairman _____ and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Bill No. _____. My name is Barry Downing. I am a Kansas businessperson and president of Northrock, Inc. Northrock is based in Wichita with subsidiary companies: Advance Catastrophe Technologies, Petro Power, TGC Development, and Ritchie Development. My family also maintains a charitable endowment that supports numerous Kansas community causes. These organizations in total employ approximately 230 people across Kansas.

For the past 15 years, I have advocated both locally and nationally for investment in early childhood education, and I have worked to highlight the significant economic impact high-quality care has on both student/family life outcomes and our business environment, through better educated and productive employees and citizenry. High-quality, affordable day care is good for business.

The latest pandemic crisis has highlighted what those involved in early education have known for many years, which is the tenet that high-quality child care is critical infrastructure for our economic success. As we have all witnessed, child care does not only impact parents, but it also affects our schools, businesses and basic community services. When child care is unaffordable, inconsistent or disrupted, families, employees, businesses, and our communities all suffer. Without it, there can be no strong economy.

Kansas needs a more affordable and stable child care infrastructure.

- Infant care in Kansas costs more than \$11,000/yr. (28% more than in-state tuition at a four-year public college); care for a 4-year-old is nearly \$9,000/yr.
- Infant care for one child takes up 18% of a median family income in Kansas
- A Kansas minimum wage worker needs to work full-time for 39 weeks to pay child care for one infant
- Child care is unaffordable for typical families in Kansas¹

Child care is one of the biggest expenses families will face and for many, the cost in Kansas makes it out of reach.

The Employer Child Care Tax Credit Bill is one positive public/private step to help address the untenable fragility in our child care infrastructure. We must consider access to affordable, consistent, high-quality child care as a critical focal point to help ensure the success of our families, businesses and economy recovery. I urge you to support Bill No. _____ and other efforts to make high-quality child care available to all Kansans. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have now or in the future.

Sincerely,

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¹Economic Policy Institute, **The Cost of Child Care in Kansas**, October 2020. <https://www.epi.org/child-care-costs-in-the-united-states/#/KS>