



**Testimony to House Committee on Commerce
Supporting HB2785
March 6, 2024**

The Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce and Civic Council of Greater Kansas City

The Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce (KC Chamber) and Civic Council of Kansas City (Civic Council) representing nearly 2,000 businesses (40% of which are in Kansas) support HB 2785 which would create the Office of Early childhood. This legislation will allow for Kansas to be able to streamline processes and reduce burdens placed on families, providers, communities, and businesses that are currently forced to navigate four different state agencies to receive the support they need.

The KC Chamber and Civic Council have identified workforce development and early childhood education and childcare as a critical and immediate need for the Kansas City area and the State of Kansas. According to the Mid America Regional Council (MARC), there are nearly 84,00 job postings by area employers in the last 12 months. One of those hurdles of the workforce shortage is access to childcare, HB 2785 will help expand access.

States across the US, including Missouri, have discovered, placing all child care and early learning programs and procedures into a unified early childhood office allows for greater efficiency, fewer administrative hurdles for Kansans to jump through, and increased citizen access to childcare programs and support. Studies have shown that a unified early childhood entity with a streamlined system should increase the number of providers enrolled in the program and provide Kansas parents with more options for affordable care.

The KC Chamber and Civic Council supports the creation of the Office of Early Childhood and encourages this committee to pass HB2414 with a favorable recommendation.

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