

Thank you madam chair for considering this testimony. My name is Nick Felder. I am a child care center owner of Bright Minds Academy LLC in Hays, KS. I am here today to submit my testimony on Kansas Senate Bill 282.

Child care was never something that I envisioned spending my life being passionate about. After graduating high school I went to college at Kansas State University and began my career just down the street at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas. I spent my entire eight years in my professional career as an industrial engineer at BCBSKS.

I was lucky enough to meet the most beautiful audit manager during my time there, and she just happened to be from the Hays area. We got married, had twins and 10 months later were expecting another boy. With both of us having the same childhood home, we wanted to explore the option of moving closer to family. The only problem was that there were no clear career transitions for us to be able to make that life change. Furthermore, when we started looking into child care options we quickly realized that we would not be able to get our children the care that we would need to make this move a reality.

After a little research, and a couple of seemingly crazy conversations, we seriously started looking into the possibility of launching our own child care center in the Hays community. Child care, and child care regulations quickly became our entire working universe. We got started on obtaining our program director credentials, sold our house, and started making the transition to the Hays community. Three years later, I'm happy to report that we are a thriving child care business currently enrolling for the 2025 school year. Our passion now firmly lies within the child care field to create a warm, rich environment for as many children as we possibly can.

First and foremost the proposed changes to the child care regulations would allow us to serve so many more children than we currently do without having to structurally change our current building. With additional spots open to the community, additional revenue will be accessible to us. Currently the only major levers we have the ability to pull in our industry are tuition rates, and staff wages. The ability to offer more spots to the community will allow us to raise staff wages, enhance the staff retirement planning we currently have in place, and provide additional benefits to our children and staff.

I thought it would be important for you to hear from a rural child care business owner to put into perspective the impact that this proposed bill will have. In our smaller markets we cannot feasibly charge the rates that larger, eastern Kansas markets are able to charge. Every dollar matters a little bit more in smaller communities where the profit margins are typically much slimmer. Additionally, there are typically less child care options for families, so providing more available spots per child care location will make a huge impact on our rural communities.

What excites us most about the proposed changes to the child care regulations is the ability to invest more back into our program. We have ambitious goals to stabilize the child care needs in the community of Hays. We have a second location projected to open in August of 2023, and a third projected for August of 2025. Once we stabilize the Hays market, our goal is to expand to

other rural markets in Western Kansas. There are so many beautiful small towns in our state that will cease to exist if the child care problem is not solved within their communities. The proposed change to the child care regulations will make this task much more attainable and feasible, so we would love to see the proposed changes put into place.

Thank you for taking the time to read this testimony and consider passing Kansas Senate Bill No. 282. We greatly appreciate the work that you do and the attention that you have placed upon the child care field.

Regards,  
Nick Felder