



March 1, 2024

Stacie Clarkson

Proponent Written-Only Testimony on HB 2785

House Commerce, Labor, and Economic Development Committee

Chair Tarwater and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2785. The Southeast Kansas Education Service Center – Greenbush will soon be celebrating our 50th anniversary, and for over thirty of those years, we have been providing high-quality early childhood services. Efforts to support families with very young children started with the organization of one of the original Parents as Teacher consortiums. Today we continue to provide that infrastructure and serve as the employer for over 165 home visitors across the state under PAT and Part C services.

Greenbush has supported preschool efforts in school districts, collected and analyzed data to bring funds to local early childhood efforts, and currently serves as a leader in supporting infants and toddlers with delays and disabilities. This plan would support our work and would make it much more efficient. This bill would assist local school districts, community groups, and faith-based organizations as they rally to address the needs of young families in their area.

An Office of Early Childhood has been needed for years. This effort would align policies, avoid confusion, and make it easier for families to access care and education. Navigating multiple regulations and requirements has been something we have been willing to do, but with this plan, we could spend more time in direct service under a consolidated system. This plan doesn't "add". It just "aligns." The Task Force was made up of people from all over the state with varying backgrounds and opinions. Greenbush thanks them for doing the work of bringing this plan forward. I hope Kansas follows the lead of many other states that have consolidated systems to support their youngest citizens.

Our early childhood team at Greenbush and I would be pleased to share their experiences with you. Please contact me at 620-330-0209 or at Stacie.clarkson@greenbush.org .

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