

March 6, 2024

Julie Lyon, Director of Economic Development

Kiowa, Barber, and Comanche Counties

Proponent Written-Only Testimony on HB 2785

House Committee on Commerce, Labor and Economic Development

Chairman Tarwater and members of the Committee:

Thank You for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2785. Over the past nearly three years, I've dedicated myself to addressing the critical need for childcare services in Rural and Western Kansas. During this time, I've achieved significant milestones, including the successful establishment of two new daycares in Kiowa County and securing funding for an additional 48 daycare slots in that area. Additionally, plans are underway to add another 12 slots in Comanche County in the coming year.

As you're well aware, expanding childcare services in rural areas presents a myriad of challenges. From navigating regulations to finding suitable space, obtaining insurance, addressing workforce shortages, and securing funding, each step forward has required tremendous effort and perseverance.

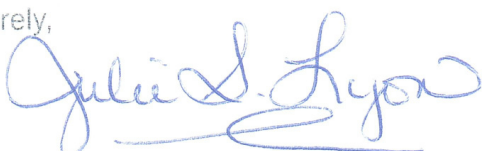
That's why I support the creation of the Office of Early Childhood. Kansas stands to benefit greatly from a centralized organization dedicated to streamlining communication and functions related to childcare. Throughout my experience in opening new facilities, one of the most significant hurdles has been maintaining consistent communication among our organization, childcare providers, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE), and the Office of the Fire Marshal. The establishment of this office would undoubtedly alleviate many of these communication challenges, enabling more efficient processes and ultimately facilitating the expansion of childcare services statewide.

With your support, and with the creation of the Office of Early Childhood, I am confident that we can continue to make substantial strides in increasing access to quality childcare across Kansas, and do so at an accelerated pace. I urge you to vote in favor of HB 2785, as it represents a significant step forward in addressing the critical childcare needs of our communities.

Should you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at livekiowacountyks@gmail.com. I am more than willing to share my experiences and provide any assistance you may need.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your commitment to improving the lives of families and children throughout our state.

Sincerely,



Julie Lyon
Director of Economic Development
Kiowa, Barber, and Comanche Counties

