UNITED WE.

Testimony re: House Bill 2704
House Committee on Local Government

February 19, 2024

Dear Chairman Bergquist and Members of the Committee:

My name is Wendy Doyle, and I am the President and CEO of United WE. United WE was called to focus on the issue of childcare during the pandemic, when many women struggled to stay in the workforce, or dropped out of it, because of barriers to childcare. Our mission is to advance all women's economic and civic leadership, so our organization has been working with many stakeholders to help solve the childcare dilemma so that women can fully participate in the workforce. Our research report, the Status of Women in Kansas, told us that in Kansas, average infant care costs range from 8 to 13 percent of median household income. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services defines affordable childcare as seven percent of a household budget, so there is work to be done to address this dynamic.

Our organization is currently conducting research on home-based childcare centers in particular to better understand how licensing impacts those centers' abilities to operate and stay in business. Our research focusing on the Kansas childcare licensing framework will be released soon and we look forward to sharing those findings with you in detail. Today, I can share with you that home-based childcare providers face unique challenges and often struggle to stay afloat. House Bill 2704 will help create conditions where home-based providers are better supported and better able to succeed, meaning more women will be better able to participate in the state's economy.

According to the McKinsey Global Institute, the Kansas economy can grow by 10-15% by 2025 if women are fully participating in the workforce. House Bill 2704 will get us closer to that goal and United WE is pleased to support it.

Thank you for the opportunity to share United WE's perspective on this bill.
Sincerely,

Wendy D. Doyle
President and CEO
United WE