



Testimony to Committee on Children and Families on House Bill No. 2228
By Leadell Ediger, Executive Director
Child Care Aware® of Kansas
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Representative Concannon and Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony for House Bill 2228. My name is Leadell Ediger, and I am the Executive Director of Child Care Aware® of Kansas. We are the state network that supports four child care resource and referral agencies serving all 105 counties in Kansas. We are in a unique position within communities to work with families, child care providers, and state and local governments to strengthen the quality of child care. We do this by:

- Ensuring families have access to affordable, high-quality child care across the state, through child care referrals and consumer education.
- Supporting child care providers, including assistance with starting and operating a child care business, on-going professional development and training with both in person and on-line classes, and information and support about how to improve the quality of child care.
- Networking with employers and community partners to provide information about family-friendly policies, programs that benefit employees, and how to support the development of high-quality child care in their communities. In fact, today I'm at the Statehouse with approximately 20 Salina business leaders and non-profit organizations taking part in the Salina Chamber of Commerce visit to the Statehouse.

Before first grade, a child may spend over 10,000 hours in child care. Research tells us that children enrolled in a good early education program during the first five years of life are most likely to be in a highly skilled job or in college at age 21. Child care fills an important need - when families have access to high-quality child care, parents can go to work, employers fill jobs, and children enter school ready to learn. **One basic tenant of high-quality care and education is a foundation of safety standards set by government, including licensing standards that are thoughtfully developed and implemented county by county.**

Children's safety while in child care settings must be one of the highest priorities for all of Kansans! As a child care resource and referral agency we provide professional development and support for any licensed provider throughout Kansas. We have the utmost respect and gratitude for the hard work that early childhood providers extend to families and young children daily. We encourage these early childhood professionals to be that "professional". That definition itself, reflects that child care providers are thoughtful and intentional about the important work that they engage in, many of them operating a business out of their home. In Kansas, we have high regulatory standards that Child Care Aware of Kansas fully supports and this means that everyone, caring for children must be licensed by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. It is the safety precaution that we all need to ensure that young children are well cared for when their parents are at work.

Child Care Aware® of Kansas stands in support of the proposed bill if a child care facility intentionally ignores licensing rules and regulations. I truly appreciate the opportunity to provide supportive comments on House Bill 2228 that when fully implemented will strengthen the early childhood field in Kansas.