



February 22, 2021

Testimony of Callie Peace, Executive Director
Kansas Parents as Teachers Association
Proponent HB 2371

House Children and Seniors Committee

Chairperson Concannon and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in favor of HB 2371. Kansas Parents as Teachers Association provides a statewide commitment to giving each Kansas child the best possible start in life. We are in favor of removing the current barriers that prevent eligible families from receiving SNAP (food assistance) and child care subsidy benefits. Parents as Teachers programs build strong communities, thriving families and children that are healthy, safe and ready to learn by matching parents and caregivers with trained professionals during a child's earliest years in life, from pregnancy through kindergarten. Parents as Teachers internationally recognized evidence-based home visiting model is backed by 35 years of research with proven outcomes for children and families and currently serves 121,000 families in 50 U.S. states, 115 Tribal organizations, five other countries and one U.S. territory.

One of the Essential Requirements for the Parents as Teachers programs is that Parent Educators connect families with resources that help them reach their goals and needs. Parents as Teachers programs recognize that parents need support when raising children. We partner with families to identify and connect with programs and resources that may be helpful. Parent Educators work with families to strengthen protective factors such as parental resilience, social connections, knowledge of parents and child development, concrete support in times of need and social and emotional competence of children. As a result, parents report they feel less stressed, more motivated to try new parenting strategies, better able to understand their child's development, more likely to read with their child, and that their relationship with their child is stronger. Parents as Teachers is a family-centered, results-driven approach to support young children and families, particularly those who are overburdened and underserved.

As we work to connect families with resources that support their family well-being through both SNAP and child care subsidies we continue to find that families have to choose between acceptance of policies that keep them from achieving their long term goals of education in order to provide for the immediate needs of their family. SNAP benefits and child care subsidies are both critical supports families with young children need in order to thrive and reach their full potential. Parents often feel undue stress outside of the workplace and school when they do not have the appropriate tools to provide adequate child care that supports the development of their children or the ability to provide for their child's basic needs. Today's workforce, secondary learners and postsecondary learners are parenting the future workforce, so how things are handled now matter to ensure that our future workforce grows up to be healthy employees and citizens. Providing parents with the tools to handle parenting issues can help to reduce stress and worry, as well as allow parents to be more productive members of the Kansas economy.

According to the latest 2015 Child Maltreatment Report, published in January 2017 by the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the highest rate of child abuse is in children under one year of age. The requirement of agreeing to work with DCF and child support enforcement for SNAP and child care subsidy leaves many parents fearful of contact with a former abusive partner and therefore unable to receive the

support their family needs. Leaving an abusive relationship involves transitioning from being controlled to being in control while coping with the costs of a domestic life filled with fear, terror, and devastation. This change takes tremendous strength as one's energy shifts from survival mode to starting a new life and often requires one receive assistance for both food assistance and child care.

HB 2371 would remove child care subsidy and food assistance from the child support requirements as well as exempt adult students enrolled in a public or private elementary or secondary school or postsecondary educational institution from the work requirements for child care subsidy. Furthermore, HB 2371 removes all requirements imposed on adults pursuing postsecondary education for childcare assistance. HB 2371 will help ensure that Kansas children receive the best start in life by removing barriers of access to child care and food.

Thank you for your consideration,

Callie Peace

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