



February 24, 2020

John Wilson, President  
Kansas Action for Children  
Written testimony in support of Senate Bill 440  
Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee

Chairman Suellentrop and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 440, which would provide an additional option to fulfill work participation requirements under the cash assistance program. Kansas Action for Children's vision is to make Kansas the best state to raise -- and be -- a child. KAC shapes state and federal policies that improve health, education, and financial outcomes for young children and the adults who care for them, especially those living in poverty. We support this bill because Kansas Action for Children believes in providing the best start possible to young children, which includes economic stability for new parents by continuing to receive cash assistance during their child's earliest months.

SB 440 would change what satisfies the current work requirement and allow a single parent of a child who is between three months and one year of age to fulfill work participation requirements by engaging in in-home parenting skills training. This change would benefit the child, the parent, and the state.

Currently, a single parent of a three-month-old infant faces a difficult decision, having to choose between continuing to receive needed economic support or going back to work. Research shows that "it takes time to become a responsive caregiver to a young child, establishing a pattern that will promote the child's long-term cognitive, social, and emotional development."<sup>1</sup> It is important for parents to have an opportunity to stay home and bond with their children.

The bill would benefit new families, but the change outlined in the proposed legislation could also save the state money. If parents qualify for cash assistance, they would also qualify for child care assistance. If a parent needs to go back to work to satisfy the requirements needed to receive cash assistance, then they will need, and be eligible for, child care assistance. On average, Kansas spends more on monthly child care assistance payments than cash assistance. For example, Kansas's monthly payment rate for center care for a one-year-old in Sedgwick

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Zigler, Susan Muenchow, and Christopher J. Ruhm, *Time Off With Baby: The Case for Paid Care Leave*, 2012.

County was \$740, not including the parental contribution.<sup>2</sup> However, the maximum cash assistance payment for a family of two in a high-cost, high-population county is much less, at just \$284 a month.<sup>3</sup> It would be more economical for the state to continue to provide cash assistance to parents of children between three months of age and one year of age, allowing the parent to stay at home and bond with their child, than to provide child care assistance for the new parent to fulfill harsh work requirements.

Kansas Action for Children strongly supports SB 440. This bill will provide continued, needed financial assistance to Kansas infants and the adults who care for them. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.

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<sup>2</sup> National Women’s Law Center. State Child Care Assistance Policies: Kansas. February 2020. [https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/kansas-childcare-subsidy2019\\_v1.pdf](https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/kansas-childcare-subsidy2019_v1.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Kansas Department of Children and Families. Maximum Cash Assistance Payments. <http://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/ees/Pages/Cash/CashAssistance.aspx>