

February 1, 2010

To: Public Health and Welfare Committee
From: Suzanne Wikle, Director of Health Policy

Good afternoon Chairman Barnett and members of the committee. It is my pleasure to appear before you today in support of Senate Bill 447.

Kansas among the worst states

A 2009 report by the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies ranked Kansas 47th in the nation for child care oversight and regulation. Families in most other states rely on a child care system that has adequate checks and balances, but unfortunately that is not the case in Kansas. This lack of oversight has contributed to a growing number of preventable deaths in child care facilities.

1 in 3 child care facilities are never inspected

One step toward improving the quality and oversight of child care in Kansas is to implement inspections for *every* child care facility. Currently, “Registered Homes” are never inspected unless it is too late – multiple complaints or a child’s death. According to KDHE data, Registered Homes have a disproportionately high rate of sleep-related deaths. In the past three years, 88% of deaths in Registered Homes have been sleep-related, by far the most common reason for a child’s death in a Registered Home. Information on safe sleep practices is a central component of on-site inspections, along with verifying that the facility has appropriate equipment (cribs) for children to use for sleep.

Just as every restaurant, beauty salon and gas pump in this state is inspected, so should every child care facility. We already have a system in place for inspecting child care facilities in Kansas; SB 447 uses the existing system to ensure the safety of thousands more Kansas children and give their families peace of mind that their children are being cared for in a safe environment during the work day.

Budget Neutral Proposal

SB 447 takes the important first step of inspecting all child care facilities. KDHE has proposed a budget neutral way to complete initial inspections for Registered Homes. This proposal uses existing resources by shifting now annual inspections of licensed facilities to once every 15 months, providing enough resources to complete initial inspections of new Registered homes.

I respectfully ask for your support of SB 447.