

STATE OF KANSAS



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COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

SESSION:

COMMERCE - VICE CHAIR

ASSESSMENT & TAXATION - CO-VICE CHAIR

JUDICIARY

INTERIM:

JOINT COMMITTEE: ARTS AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

CHILDRENS ISSUES

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Good afternoon Chairman Barnett and committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of SB 447.

I became interested in improving the standards for child care in Kansas through my service as Chair of the Joint Committee on Children's Issues. Like most people in Kansas, I was surprised to learn that our state ranks so poorly when it comes to child care oversight.

During the interim session I was contacted by a group of local child care advocates who have lost their children in registered day care homes. I was shocked and horrified to hear their stories. You will be hearing from them today.

I asked the committee for introduction of this bill because the lack of child care oversight has caused too many child deaths in Kansas and the state needs to take an important step toward improving the safety of child care homes – providing inspections for every child care facility. A constituent of mine, Alecia Patrick, will speak in more detail about how the absence of inspections cause tragedy, but I want the committee to know that this is a problem we can solve, even in this tough budget year.

Our constituents assume that because a child care provider has officially registered with the state, that the environment their child will be in is a protected environment and that the state has taken measures to ensure they will be safe. Unfortunately, upon learning more about this through the tragic losses of innocent children, this simply isn't the case. Families are unaware of the lack of oversight of child care facilities registered in Kansas.

The good news is that we can use the existing system to inspect every child care facility in Kansas. With the passage of SB 447, families can rest assured that their children are being cared for in a safe environment. As our state continues to weather a tough economy, it is critical that we keep Kansans in the workforce, and that requires safe and affordable child care options for working families.

I will be happy to stand for questions.