



## *Standing Strong for Kansas Kids*

Legislative Wrap-up 2013

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### *Who will stand up for Kansas children?*

After the 2012 election, we lost a number of champions for children in the Statehouse. With so many new faces in the Legislature in 2013, introducing our work and capturing their attention among numerous competing issues was certainly a challenge.

But with change comes new opportunities. We are building relationships with lawmakers who understand the importance of standing up for policies and public investments that help Kansas children grow up with the best chance for success in life. That means ensuring that health care is accessible, early learning opportunities are high quality and programs that promote families' economic security are protected. Together with new children's champions and supporters like you, Kansas Action for Children will continue our record of success to strengthen Kansas families.

—Shannon Cotsoradis, president and CEO



## HIGH-QUALITY EARLY EDUCATION

Early learning programs help to prepare our youngest citizens for success in school and later in the workforce. After our successful efforts to restore \$9.2 million over two years to the Early Childhood Block Grant, programs supported by the Children's Initiatives Fund, such as Parents as Teachers and Early Head Start, were fully funded as recommended by the Kansas Children's Cabinet and the governor. Unfortunately, the remaining \$9.5 million from this year's tobacco settlement payment was swept from the Kansas Endowment for Youth Fund to the State General Fund. This endowment is essential for securing long-term stability for children's programs, and Kansas Action for Children and the Kansas Coalition for School Readiness will continue to work to protect it.

## ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR FAMILIES

The tax plan passed in 2012 added to the burden of working families with the elimination of the Child and Dependent Care Credit and the Homestead Property Tax Refund Program. This year, more programs and tax credits that aid low-income families were targeted. The KIDS Higher Education Savings Match Program, which provides a dollar-for-dollar match to low-income parents who save for their children's post-secondary schooling, faced elimination. Lawmakers also proposed cutting the Kansas Earned Income Tax Credit from 17 percent of the federal credit to 9 percent. Although the Child and Dependent Care Credit was not restored, KAC and partner organizations worked to preserve the KIDS program, and the Kansas Earned Income Tax Credit remains unchanged.



## INCREASED ACCESS TO DENTAL CARE

Finding a dentist who is accepting new patients or has an office close by is a challenge for thousands of Kansans. That's why addressing the dental workforce shortage with mid-level dental providers called Registered Dental Practitioners is one of KAC's top priorities. This year, House Bill 2157 and Senate Bill 197 to allow RDPs to work in Kansas were introduced. Additionally, our coalition of supporters grew to 50 members, including community groups; health professionals; business leaders; and our newest partner, the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation. Momentum for mid-level providers is growing across the nation, and Kansas has the opportunity to lead the way. KAC and the Kansas Dental Project will continue to propel the effort forward in 2014.