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Governor vetoes \$5 million sweep of funds for Kansas children

TOPEKA—Today, Gov. Brownback vetoed a \$5 million sweep of funds from the Kansas Endowment for Youth (KEY) Fund for the Kansas Bioscience Authority.

“The governor's action today will contribute toward his goals of reducing childhood poverty and increasing fourth-grade reading proficiency,” said Shannon Cotsoradis, president and CEO of Kansas Action for Children. “Early education programs give Kansas kids the skills they need to succeed in school and later in the workforce. The governor responded to pressure from advocates, educators and parents to reverse this sweep and to invest in Kansas children.”

Under the system created by the Legislature, payments to the state from the master tobacco settlement agreement go directly to the KEY Fund, which serves as a long-term endowment for early childhood programs. Each year, money is transferred from the KEY Fund to the Children's Initiatives Fund (CIF) to provide funding for high-quality early childhood programs like Parents as Teachers and Early Head Start. This year, Kansas received a \$62 million tobacco payment but had budgeted \$55 million for the CIF. The unappropriated \$7 million will now remain in the KEY Fund.

“The KEY Fund has been used repeatedly as a piggy bank that lawmakers raid whenever they feel like it,” said Cotsoradis. “The money from the tobacco settlement payments is earmarked for children—and since we know those payments will start to decline in just a few years, now more than ever we need a true endowment for early childhood. The reversal of the sweep is the just the first step toward restoring long-term stability for children's programs.”

Since the establishment of the KEY Fund in 1999, more than \$140 million has been diverted for other purposes. At the end of Fiscal Year 2015, the KEY Fund is expected to have an ending balance of only \$13.6 million.



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