

# 2020 Legislative Policy Agenda

Salina Area Chamber of Commerce

City of Salina

Kansas State University Polytechnic

Kansas Wesleyan University

University of Kansas School of Medicine-Salina

Salina Regional Health Center

Salina Airport Authority

Salina Area Technical College

Salina Public Schools

Saline County

Saline Community Economic Development Organization



Saline Community  
Economic Development  
Organization



# 2020 Legislative Policy Agenda

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## Federal Legislative Policy Agenda

### *Federal Aviation Administration Appropriations – Full funding*

The effectiveness of the recently enacted, multi-year FAA reauthorization bill is contingent on full appropriations of the FAA's authorized programs. Programs and functions such as the Airport Improvement Program, the Federal Contract Tower Program, airway facilities maintenance, aircraft certification and safety enforcement impact the Salina Regional Airport, the K-State Polytechnic, United/SkyWest Airlines and aviation businesses based at the Salina Airport.

- **Full FFY 2020 and 2021 funding for FAA programs is critical for the continued operation, growth and development of the Salina Regional Airport and associated businesses and organizations.**

### *Federal Contract Tower Program – Full Funding*

Within the FAA Reauthorization bill are provisions for the FAA's Federal Contract Program. The FAA contracts with private sector companies to operate 256 air traffic control towers at considerable savings to the federal government. The FAA's attempts to cut funding to the contract tower program have been rebuffed by Congress multiple times. The Salina Airport's control tower is a contract tower operated by Midwest ATC, Inc. of Overland Park, KS. An operational air traffic control tower is essential for aviation safety at the Salina Regional Airport and the viability of United/SkyWest service and the K-State aviation program.

- **To prevent the FAA from taking action contrary to Congressional intent, authorization and appropriations bills for the Federal Contract Tower Program should be specific about the program and limit the FAA's discretion over program budget cuts.**

### *U. S. Department of Transportation Essential Air Service (EAS) Program – Full Funding*

The EAS program funds subsidize air service at the Salina Regional Airport for the benefit of Salina, Saline County and North Central Kansas residents. The community has successfully restored scheduled air service and the first 20 months of United/SkyWest regional jet service to Denver and Chicago is a documented success. The current Salina EAS contract will be renewed by the USDOT in CY 2020.

- **Full EAS Program funding for FFY 2020 and 2021 will allow United and SkyWest the ability to continue to offer Denver and Chicago flights for Salina, Saline County and North Central Kansas.**

### *Higher Education Act Reauthorization*

The Higher Education Act (HEA) was due for a reauthorization in 2013 but has yet to be addressed by Congress. Higher education is a crucial economic engine for Salina. We encourage Congress to pass a bipartisan HEA reauthorization package that seeks to:

- **increase access for all students who seek a post-secondary credential**
- **provide additional assistance to students and families so that they can afford the post-secondary education of their choice – public or non-profit, 2-year, 4-year, or short-term credential**
- **ensure institutions are accountable to students and taxpayers while seeking to simplify regulatory burdens that often come at the expense of the educational mission**

- **recognize and protect the critical mission and capacity differences across the higher education ecosystem that make American higher education the world leader.**

## *Rural Infrastructure*

Past infrastructure initiatives often focused on urban and suburban areas while not adequately addressing the unique needs of rural communities. Meanwhile, rural communities have seen their infrastructure deteriorate, jeopardizing jobs, health and wellbeing, and overall competitiveness in agriculture and other industries important to rural America.

Transportation infrastructure improvement to highways, bridges, and railways are the most obvious need in rural communities, but not the only need that must be addressed. In addition, critical needs exist in providing affordable housing options, expanding broadband, and enhancing the ability to supply affordable, reliable and secure power for the rural economy.

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# **State of Kansas Legislative Policy Agenda**

## *State Revenue/Tax Reform*

The legislature should undertake a comprehensive review of state and local tax policy aimed at tax reform designed to enhance the ability of both state and local governments to provide essential services for the citizens of Kansas as well as provide resources to address critical future priorities. As part of this reform effort, all three legs of the tax base – income, sales, and property – should be examined and then broadened. This includes continued work to roll back past income tax rate reductions and reduce the number of special exemptions and tax credits within the tax code. At the same time, policymakers should protect the tax-exempt treatment of those entities that serve a clearly defined civic or educational purpose. These include schools, colleges, hospitals and health clinics, museums, and a number of other worthy organizations who provide highly valuable, broadly available community benefits on whom Salina’s citizens depend.

## *K-12 Education*

### *School Funding*

Education continues to be a major impetus for economic development in communities across Kansas. Currently 71% of Kansas jobs require some sort of postsecondary education – 35% require a certificate or associate degree and 36% require a postsecondary degree. \* Educating each student to the level needed for postsecondary success requires sustained attention to school funding.

*\*According to KSDE (Achieving the Visions, Powerpoint/Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce).*

### *Kansans Can Vision*

The Kansans Can vision for education, Kansas leads the world in the success of each student, is attainable with adequate resources and excellent instruction. High school graduates must leave public schools with the academic preparation, cognitive preparation, technical skills, employability skills and civic engagement to be successful in postsecondary education, in the attainment of an industry-recognized certification, or in the workforce. The five outcomes identified by the Kansas State Department of Education will provide Kansans an ongoing measure of progress toward this vision.

Those outcomes are:

- social-emotional growth
- kindergarten readiness

- individual plans of study
- high school graduation and postsecondary success
- promote conversation about student success from birth through their formal schooling.

In USD 305, budget dollars are allocated for *Kansans Can* outcomes.

- All students have an individual plan of study beginning in middle school.
- Kindergarten readiness is a community-wide discussion and multi-agency focus.
- Partnerships for social-emotional services and trained counselors and social workers allow students to access support during the school day.
- Career and technical education and robust elective opportunities provide a well-balanced education.
- Recruiting and retaining quality teachers and staff is an ongoing focus.
- Community partnerships and family engagement will continue to be priorities.

We support continued funding to expand programs related to *Kansans Can* outcomes.

### *Postsecondary Preparation*

More Kansas students must graduate high school with the strong academic preparation required to complete postsecondary education and training. Funding matters when attempting to raise educational attainment and economic prosperity, both individually and statewide. We must continue to invest in Kansas K-12 education, expand early childhood education, redesign schools for student success, increase measurable results for high school completion, postsecondary participation and workforce skills.

### *Special Education*

Kansas law requires that the legislature fund special education at 92% of excess cost. Currently the state funds 78% of the excess cost of special education. This shortfall means that districts must shift general education funds to meet growing needs in special education. The challenge to educate students who have aggressive behaviors is mounting. With nearly one in six students receiving special education services, and special education enrollment up 20% since 2001, increased funding is necessary to ensure all students leave K-12 education workforce ready.

### *Early Childhood Education*

To raise education levels of the Kansas workforce we must begin in the early preschool years. Well before students enter K-12 public school, learning opportunities begin the trajectory to postsecondary success. Early childhood is a time of rapid brain growth and strong programming for preschoolers has a powerful return on investment. All Kansas children must have access to high quality early childhood education to ensure every child enters school with the social-emotional and academic skills to be successful.

### *State Revenue/Tax Reform*

A comprehensive review of state and local tax policy should be undertaken with the result being tax reform that will enhance services for citizens of Kansas, including funding for education.

### *Suitable Education*

Article Six of the Kansas Constitution requires the Kansas Legislature “provide for intellectual, educational, vocational and scientific improvement by establishing and maintaining public schools...” Salina USD 305 does not support any constitutional amendment that would alter this. Responsibility needs to remain with the state legislature to “make suitable provision to fund the educational interests of Kansas school districts.”

Responsibility for the operation of public schools needs to remain with locally elected boards of education, as indicated in the Kansas Constitution.

## *College and Career Ready Standards*

The Kansas College and Career Ready Standards are based on standards developed by a consortium of state government and educational leaders. The standards represent a clear set of shared goals and expectations for the knowledge and skills that will help students succeed. The standards are designed to ensure that students graduating from high school are prepared for credit-bearing entry courses in two or four-year college programs or entry into the workforce. Kansas Legislators are urged to preserve the current Kansas College and Career Ready Standards, which reflect the expertise of educators and continue to strengthen the scholastic core of all Kansas schools.

### *Specific priorities include:*

- **Adequately fund schools through the existing formula passed under Senate Bill 16 to address the needs of students and ensure each student and school have the capacity to meet the Rose Standards or foundational structures under the *Kansans Can* vision.**
- **Expand funding for career and technical education and social-emotional supports.**
- **Fully fund special education at the statutory level (the law requires 92% funding; the legislature is funding only 78%).**
- **Fund full-day preschool education for special education students (1.0 FTE).**
- **Fund half-day preschool for all general education four-year-olds who attend a preschool provided and funded by public school districts (.5 FTE).**
- **Maintain Article Six of the Kansas Constitution as written.**
- **Preserve the current Kansas College and Career Ready Standards.**

### *Recruitment and retention of highly qualified teachers.*

Throughout Kansas, including Salina, teacher vacancies have become increasingly difficult to fill. We encourage the legislature to direct the Kansas State Department of Education to:

- **Create a simpler process for Kansas to recognize the teacher licenses issued by other states.**
- **Expand alternate routes to teacher licensure.**
- **Create a simpler path between a college graduate's program of study to teacher licensure in that same field.**

Legislative support for incentivizing districts' upgrade of their medical benefits offered to staff, keeping KPERS solvent and improving it and advancing Kansas's workforce development would enhance the appeal of locating in Kansas to the smaller pool of teachers who are seeking employment.

## *Post-Secondary Education*

### *Funding*

To maintain the faculty, staffs, and facilities at Kansas State University Polytechnic Campus and Salina Area Technical College and the KU School of Medicine - Salina at a high level, state investments are a responsibility of the Governor and the Kansas Legislature. The Kansas Board of Regents has approved a strategic agenda "Foresight 2020". Strategic goal one in Foresight 2020 is to increase educational attainment in Kansas to 60% of resident adults having a credential or degree by 2020. In addition, the Board has established budget priorities for state universities, community colleges, and technical colleges to be submitted to the Governor and presented for consideration by the 2020 Kansas Legislature.

Specific priorities are:

- We advocate funding higher education at a level appropriate for current and future educational needs with particular attention paid to funding at levels to restore prior year cuts.
- Fulfill the funding requests of the Kansas Board of Regents for state universities, community colleges, and technical colleges.
- The cost model used to fund two-year colleges has not been fully funded since the inception of the model. We advocate funding the two-year sector's cost model fully.
- We support necessary funding for quality health education facilities at the University of Kansas School of Medicine – Salina and other School of Medicine campuses. The KUSM-Salina was created without any new State of Kansas or university allocations and continues to operate without any new funds (in fact there have been budget cuts). Although the University has been generous in its support of the Salina campus, it is largely due to the generosity of local/regional individuals and institutions that the school has succeeded.
- We support promotion, advancement, and necessary funding to elevate the stature of University of Kansas School of Medicine and ongoing measures to support the University of Kansas Medical Center's Comprehensive Cancer Research-To-Cure Initiative.
- We support the full funding of the Excel in CTE tuition program. The program is supposed to cover instructional costs, extraordinary costs (such as expensive equipment), institutional costs, and instructional support costs. There is uncertainty in the public view about the costs that are charged to students. Many do not understand that the consumable costs are not calculated in the extraordinary costs and that students can be charged those fees according to the statute. The institutions cannot charge the students tuition and institutional fees. We advocate a larger budget for this program with the ability to expand as it is needed because this program generates the future workforce in each of the local areas of the state. The current estimate for the need exceeds \$32 million.
- Kansas State University Polytechnic continues to honor its historical mission grounded in technical education. As one of only two institutions in the state to offer degrees in aviation, the Polytechnic Campus is uniquely positioned to support and expand the local and state technical workforce needs for certified aviation technicians. The capacity for the campus to leverage this strength is limited as local and regional high school students cannot utilize Excel funding for courses leading to the approved airframe or powerplant certificates (SOC 49-3011, 51-2011 and CIP 47.0607 and 47.0608). We support the expansion of Excel in CTE funding to include funding for qualified courses at Kansas State University Polytechnic Campus.
- The state's Community Colleges can tax a local mill levy whereas the Tech Colleges cannot. This mill levy can be used for a variety of needs including capital projects at the local college. The state also funds State Capital Outlay for 16 of the 26 two-year colleges. Each Technical College and the Community Colleges who merged with an Area Vocational Technical School receive Capital Outlay funds. This amount, \$2.6 million, has been designated for capital outlay since the 1970s and the appropriation has not changed since that time. As economic engines in the development of our state's economy, the technical colleges need additional Capital resources to continue the highly productive outputs into the workforce. We advocate an increase in the appropriation to \$7.5 million and the reduction/elimination of the local Capital Outlay 50% match requirement. These resources have specific long-term impact on the future workforce.
- Kansas needs to develop a skilled labor force to meet the demands of industry. Since Technical Colleges in Kansas do not have taxing authority, the Technical colleges support a bill to re-enact KSA 79-32,261 with the modification to allow the sale of tax credits for capital outlay purposes. This proposed bill will provide fiscal resources to enhance the capability of the most productive

**segment of higher education in terms of workforce generation, graduation, and placement rates among the higher education sector.**

*College Affordability*

Kansas residents with economic need who attend a Regents university, Washburn University, or one of the twenty non-profit colleges in Kansas are eligible to receive need-based student aid through the Kansas Comprehensive Grant (KCG). Salina's Kansas Wesleyan University is among the institutions whose students are eligible for the KCG. The KCG program is both a highly efficient and a highly effective use of state dollars to support higher education. KCG recipients are 13-percentage points more likely to graduate on time than their peers. The program's low cost and potent outcomes makes the KCG an essential piece of the state's policy toolbox.

However, Kansas ranks 45th among all states in need-based aid per student, at \$120 per full-time undergraduate student. Of Kansas' bordering states, Oklahoma (\$610 per student), Nebraska (\$190 per student), Missouri (\$410 per student), Iowa (\$370 per student) and Colorado (\$460 per student) all outpace Kansas.

- **We support continued funding of the Kansas Comprehensive Grant at no less than FY20 levels.**
- **We further encourage Kansas legislators to first look to invest more in this chronically underfunded yet effective program prior to designing any new student need-based aid initiatives.**
- **We also emphasize keeping state student aid dollars (i.e. the KCG) going only to Kansans pursuing education at Kansas institutions.**

*Private College Support*

Kansas' private non-profit colleges – which include Kansas Wesleyan University – educate more than 24,000 students each year. These institutions are also important engines for economic growth in their communities, adding nearly one billion dollars to the Kansas economy annually.

Kansas' private colleges receive no direct institutional support from the state, only need based aid funds directly to their students. KWU and its peers award more than 22% of the bachelor's degrees granted in Kansas each year while receiving only 1% of the total state's higher education budget. Additionally, Kansas' private colleges have sufficient physical infrastructure to house, educate, and graduate even more students and can do so through private investment instead of depending on state spending for construction of new facilities.

- **We remind legislators not to overlook the important role played by private colleges in the educational landscape, economy and culture of Kansas.**

*Global Aeronautics Initiative*

Salina supports the Global Aeronautics Planning initiative at Kansas State University Polytechnic. This strategic initiative is aimed at providing a plan for global market leadership for the aviation academic and research programs on campus including Unmanned Aircraft Systems. The intended results are aviation-focused programs that lead the industry within their focus areas and also have a positive economic impact on this region. This initiative will focus on collaborative, multi-sector efforts that meet the pressing needs of industry and of society at large.

- **We support these efforts that harness the power of Kansas State University and other external stakeholders to enhance Salina's leadership role in the aviation sector.**

*Bulk Solids Innovation Center*

The Kansas State University Bulk Solids Innovation Center is the only research center of its kind in North America, and one of only three in the world. It is a collaborative partnership of government, for-profit, and non-profit entities including Kansas State University Polytechnic Campus; the City of Salina, Kansas; the Salina Area Chamber of Commerce; Coperion K-Tron; Salina Vortex Corporation; and several additional contributors. The Bulk Solids Innovation Center is used to study and develop the understanding of bulk solids materials

handling, in turn enhancing the businesses that use these materials or manufacture the systems that convey, store and dispense them. The Center provides a wide range of value-added solutions and services to enhance efficiency and productivity to variety of industries - food, chemicals, minerals, pharmaceuticals, and plastics. The Center provides research and consulting services to industry and the university. Testing services range from small-scale sample material characterization to full-scale material handling and storage.

- **We support the research, workforce development, and educational programs offered by the Bulk Solids Innovation Center and the economic impact and global prominence it provides.**
- **We advocate for funding this center and initiative to include \$15 million in equipment.**

## *Local Government*

### *STAR Bond /TIF*

We agree that common sense amendments can improve the current STAR Bond and Tax Increment Finance (TIF) law. The City of Salina has recently authorized issuance of STAR Bonds in support of a \$150 million downtown project that has already resulted in the formation of a STAR Bond, TIF District and three Community Improvement Districts. As a result of the time and expense involved with preparing a STAR Bond plan for ultimate review and approval in advance of STAR Bond issuance, we believe that it would be equitable for any legislative amendments made to the STAR Bond law and/or TIF law to not be applicable to current projects that have 1) already adopted a STAR Bond district; and 2) received Project Plan approval from the Department of Commerce.

### *Home Rule Authority*

We support the State of Kansas preserving the home rule authority of Kansas' cities with regard to taxation and other governance issues. The purpose of Kansas' constitutional home rule system is to allow the local electorate to govern their respective community.

- **Home Rule Authority has worked very well throughout Kansas' history and we ask the legislature to honor it.**
- **Saline County favors extending constitutional protection for County Home Rule Authority.**

### *Sales Tax*

The state sales tax is tied for the 9<sup>th</sup> highest state sales tax rate in the nation. At the current level, we are concerned that it begins to disproportionately place tax burden on the purchaser, many of which cannot afford higher taxation placed on basic needs. In addition, the sales tax is a flexible tax historically reserved for cities since most do not levy an income tax. Diversification of taxation has also allowed cities to keep their property tax rates at very reasonable levels and collect taxes from beneficiaries of local services beyond strictly residents of the jurisdiction.

- **We support the State of Kansas finding a reasonable approach to balancing the State budget, but do not support consideration of an additional increase to the statewide sales tax.**

### *Internet Sales Tax*

The global / web economy has undeniably altered consumer spending patterns in ways that have negatively impacted local and state finances and suppressed investment in local businesses as well as maintenance or construction of brick & mortar storefronts. The inability of governments to collect local option sales or compensating use tax on remote sales has significantly eroded a viable revenue source while creating an inherently unfair tax scheme. The recent U.S. Supreme Court decision in *South Dakota v. Wayfair, Inc et al.*, 138 S. Ct. 2080 (2018) favorably addresses the issue.

- **We support state legislation to implement sales & use taxes on remote sales as recently clarified by the South Dakota v. Wayfair decision.**

### *Sales Taxes on Food Products*

The City of Salina recognizes that the State of Kansas might consider the elimination of sales tax on food products. If sales tax is reduced or eliminated on food products it could result in significant fiscal impacts for local jurisdictions. We request that any approach to modify this tax have a phased implementation and that if it has a negative fiscal impact on local jurisdictions that an offsetting revenue source is made available.

### *Property Tax Lid on Counties and Municipalities*

We support the State of Kansas repealing prior legislation establishing a property tax lid on municipalities and counties. This legislation significantly reduced locally elected officials' authority and responsibility to set these tax rates based on local conditions, needs and community acceptability.

### *Dark Store Property Valuation*

We support proven techniques to determine commercial property values at their highest and best use through the use of all three methods of valuation--cost minus depreciation, sales comparison, and income.

- **We would be supportive of legislation that clarifies the appropriateness of the current property valuation methods and provides clarity precluding alternate methods and/or bases of appeal such as dark store valuation.**

### *Vacant Lot Property Valuation*

We support efforts to ensure that vacant property within the city limits that is served by municipal services (water, sewer, and streets) is assessed as vacant property rather than agricultural property.

### *Building Security*

We support legislation placing building security authority back with the local governments that own and operate their facilities. The current law takes away local control and applies a one size fits all approach that is not conducive to all city and county governments and educational institutions within the state.

### *Residential Fire Sprinkler Pre-emption*

About seven years ago, the State of Kansas adopted a law banning cities and counties from adopting and enforcing single-family and duplex residential building sprinkler requirements for new construction, even though this safety tool is included in the International Code Council (ICC) residential code. We recognize this decision was based on weighing a proven safety approach versus presumed increases in construction costs. We also recognize the debate excluded those who will eventually reside in the new home and presume a high level of fire safety.

- **With this in mind, the City of Salina believes the State of Kansas' actions were an unnecessary pre-emption of local authority and governance. As a result, we do respectfully ask that you act to repeal K.S.A. 12-16,219.**

### *Cable Television Franchise Law*

We support the State of Kansas consider amending the current cable television franchise law to require all cable television providers to broadcast the required public, education and governmental (PEG) channels in high definition (HD). These channels provide a reliable, highly utilized affordable means of engaging the local citizenry. In most, if not all of Kansas' communities, PEG channels are provided in the lower quality video resolution, while most other cable network channels are broadcast in high-definition. Cable television providers have the technology capacity to provide PEG channels in HD. They also deserve regulatory

uniformity. We believe HD service quality is desired and expected by the local citizenry and should be applied uniformly by cable television providers across the state.

### *Transient Guest Tax*

We oppose any effort by the Kansas Legislature to consider imposing a statewide Transient Guest Tax to be assessed on hotels and lodging, state cabins, and car rental with fees collected being dedicated to the State General Fund (SGF), Kansas Promotion Fee Fund, and Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism Fund (KDWPT.) The Transient Guest Tax should remain a primarily local issue, with local taxing authorities determining the appropriate rate level for their market, and the proceeds being used in accordance with the local ordinance. We would support expansion of Transient Guest Tax collections to include Air BnBs, cabins, RV parks and other accommodations used by travelers in our state.

## *Healthcare and Medical*

### *Association Healthcare Plans*

The executive order issued by President Trump in 2017, broaden the types of groups that could form association health plans with the goal of expanding affordable coverage options for small businesses and the self-employed. Importantly, the proposed rule would not preempt any current state regulations.

- **With that in mind, and the goal of expanding affordable coverage to all Kansans, we are supportive of legislation that clarifies and legalizes Association Health Care Plans.**

## *Economic Development*

### *Kansas Department of Commerce and Governor's Military Council Funding*

The Salina Community supports efforts to reorganize and fully fund Kansas Department of Commerce (KDC) programs which include the Kansas Governor's Military Council (GMC). In partnership with KDC staff the GMC has coordinated the retention and attraction of military activity within communities such as Leavenworth, Topeka, Manhattan, Junction City, Salina and Wichita. The GMC is the entity that works with State agencies such as the Adjutant General, KDOT, Commerce, Kansas Board of Regents and KDOR on military related issues.

- **Legislative support for KDC and the GMC will result in the growth of jobs and payroll that benefit the local community and the State of Kansas.**

### *Expand and Formalize Kansas Employment Exploration Program*

The Fort Riley Soldier for Life office is responsible for facilitating the exit of soldiers as they return to civilian life. The Kansas Employment Exploration Program (KEEP) Veterans Here is an initiative through the Soldier for Life office at Fort Riley. Exiting service members are highly skilled and trained and, in many cases, have security clearances as well.

- **Legislative funding and support for programs like KEEP with result in the growth of communities and provide employers with much needed skilled labor.**

### *Small Business Development & Entrepreneurship*

Through the support of Network Kansas, Salina has provided over \$400,000 of financing to businesses in the community and provided business training and education to over 200 individuals.

- **We support the continued to funding small business development and entrepreneurship programs like Network Kansas and Small Business Development Centers.**

### *Preservation and Funding of Incentive Programs*

Economic Development incentive programs are critical to the recruitment of new and expansion of existing businesses.

- **We encourage the preservation of existing programs with full funding support by the Legislature and Governor's office. Angel Investors Network, Promoting Employment Across Kansas (PEAK), High Performance Incentive Program (HPIP), Sales Tax and Revenue (STAR) Bonds and Job Creation Fund (JCF) are all vital and should be fully funded.**

### *Kansas Framework for Growth*

Support and fund the implementation of the Kansas Framework for Growth.

### *Infrastructure and Transportation*

#### *Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT)*

The Salina Community supports the Kansas Legislature approval of a 10-year transportation program as a follow on the T-Works program. Kansas Forward will build on T-Works as the means to fund multi-model transportation across Kansas. Kansas Forward will address the Kansas need for high quality highways, roads, bridges, rail, airport and other modes to meet the transportation needs for Kansans over the next decade.

- **Kansas Forward will be successful provided the program is fully funded by the Kansas Legislature.**

### *Early Childhood Programs/Child Care*

Kansas families, communities and employers need high quality childcare. Early education programs play a significant role and are an integral part of the state's economic success. The availability of quality childcare programs may impact employers' ability to attract and keep staff. The demand for childcare is significant: almost 160,000 children under the age of 6 live in homes in which all available parents work. When parents are confident that their children are well cared for, they are more productive at work.

Education matters — for childcare providers and the children in their care. Research strongly indicates that the foundation for children's later success in school and life is based on early experiences that stimulate brain development. There are only 2000 days between the time a baby is born and when he or she will start kindergarten. It is vitally important that working families have access to high quality early education programs. Quality early education is the most cost effective and efficient way to prepare children to succeed in school and life.

It is important for all of us, including business, and industry to make a strong statement that early childhood needs immediate attention! Together, let's convey our support for the expansion of government efforts for the early childhood workforce. In addition, businesses must join in public and private investments to develop and support growing the number of childcare slots throughout Kansas. And finally, we need to work with public officials and community advocates to expand childcare availability and improve the workforce quality. This can be accomplished by using community development resources to identify capital that will create a strong community infrastructure for years to come.