

DCF LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY



2/2/2021

TESTIMONY OF

Sandra Kimmons, Director of Economic and Employment Services
Kansas Department for Children and Families

TESTIMONY ON

HB 2116

Chair

Concannon

Vice Chair

Esau

Ranking Member

Ousley

and

Members of the Committee

SUMMARY OF ISSUE & DCF POSITION

House Bill 2116 proposes changes to the statutes that regulate the state's Childcare Assistance program. DCF requested and introduced this bill in an effort to maintain federal funding for childcare supports available to those that care for foster youth.

DCF provides Childcare Assistance benefits to eligible foster caregivers to help them pay for childcare costs. We provide these benefits through a federal funding source: the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF).

In order for DCF to maximize federal funds and continue to fund Childcare Assistance for all foster caregivers through CDF, DCF requests that foster caregivers be added to the list of populations in KSA 39-109 exempted from the 20 hour per week Childcare Assistance work requirement. This would allow funding for Childcare Assistance benefits for this population to continue to be funded through federal CCDF funds, saving SGF dollars and allowing DCF to continue to provide this benefit. HB 2116 accomplishes this by adding any caregiver of a child in the Secretary of DCF's custody to the list of exempted populations in KSA 39-109.

DCF supports HB 2116 because, if adopted, it would allow Kansas to continue to take advantage of a federal funding source to provide Childcare Assistance to certain foster care caregivers.

CONTEXT & HISTORY

The Childcare Assistance program provides subsidies to eligible families to help them pay childcare costs. These subsidies are funded through the federal Child Care Development Fund, a fund provided to states annually to improve childcare services administered by US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration of Children and Families, Office of Childcare.

In order to be eligible, families must have income at or below 185% of the federal poverty and the adult(s)/caretaker(s) in the home must also be employed at least 20 hours per week or participate in a work program. Most families must contribute a share of their childcare expenses and assistance amounts vary based on individual circumstances and income. Benefits are provided to families monthly via an EBT card which can only be used at DCF enrolled childcare providers.

KSA 39-709 (16) (B) exempts certain populations from the 20 hours per week work requirement for Childcare Assistance. Populations exempted include those with a documented physical or mental condition preventing them from being capable of working, adults applying for childcare assistance on behalf of a minor parent who is in high school, and individuals participating in certain food assistance and early head start work programs.

Prior to July of 2019, DCF provided payments to foster caregivers to cover childcare costs through the foster care program. These payments were funded mostly through SGF and were separate from the Childcare Assistance program. In July of 2019 DCF shifted funding for childcare payments for foster caregivers to federal funding through the Childcare Assistance program. This change was made in an effort to maximize childcare supports available to foster parents and standardize the benefit process across case management providers. As an added benefit, DCF was able to lower SGF costs for foster care childcare assistance by approximately \$1.5 million from FY 19 to FY 20 by making this change and shifting funding from the foster care program to Childcare Assistance.

After implementing these changes in 2020, it was discovered that some of the payments to foster caregivers may be unintentionally out of sync with statute and that foster caregivers working less than 20 hours a week were being provided benefits. DCF would request that these foster caregivers be added to the list of populations exempted from the work requirement. Should foster caregivers not be added to the list of exempted populations, childcare costs for foster caregivers working 1 to 19 hours a week will have to shift back to being funded through the foster care program and will be funded by SGF.

Foster caregivers provide a vital service by offering their time and home to care for some of the state's most vulnerable children. Foster caregivers include both family foster homes and relatives serving as a placement for a foster youth. Supporting foster caregivers through programs like Childcare Assistance is vital to recruiting and retaining foster families and relatives. Caregiver participation in the Childcare Assistance program also ensures that the foster children themselves attend licensed, regulated childcare facilities.

EFFECT OF LEGISLATION

If adopted HB 2116 will amend KSA 39-709 (16) (B), adding “(vi) any caregiver of a child in the custody of the Secretary in out of home placement who is in need of child care”. This will allow DCF to use the Childcare Assistance program and federal CCDF funds to continue to provide Childcare Assistance to foster caregivers working 1 to 19 hours a week.

It is important to note that should HB 2116 be adopted, DCF will still require foster caregivers to work at least one hour a week in order to be eligible to receive childcare benefits.

FISCAL IMPACT OF LEGISLATION

DCF estimates that the state would save approximately \$160,000 in SGF annually by adopting HB 2116 and allowing the funding for Childcare Assistance for this population to continue to be funded through federal CCDF dollars. Should HB 2116 not be adopted, the state will have to pay the benefits from the State General Fund.

DCF POSITION

DCF asks for your support for House Bill 2116. HB 2116 will save SGF dollars while allowing the state to continue to provide a much-needed service to foster caregivers, a population of individuals that themselves make sacrifices to provide the state a vital service. During these uncertain times it is more vital than ever that the state make use of all federal funding sources available to provide the social services families need.