

Tiny-k Alliance

The mission of the Tiny-k Alliance is to promote high quality services and sound public policy for infants with developmental disabilities, through advocacy, resource development and strategic partnerships.

Senate Ways and Means Sub-Committee on Social Services

Testimony Concerning KDHE Budget as related to Infant and Toddler (tiny-k) Services

February 13, 2015 Submitted by Katherine Kersenbrock-Ostmeyer President **Tiny-k Alliance**, Coordinator/Director Special Education tiny-k services for the Northwest Kansas Educational Service Center (NKESC).

Honorable Chair Senator Denning, and committee members:

On behalf of the Tiny-k Alliance (as well as NKESC) I am submitting testimony to support an increase in funding for tiny-k early intervention services (also know as Part C special education). Tiny-k is a special education program that mandates every developmentally delayed or disabled child, age birth to three years be identified and services offered to the family. Unlike many programs: **Waiting lists are not allowed.**

Funding for this program has simply been inadequate for several years. There are many ways to look at this with the statistics of funds to population over the years (I know my colleagues have shared those today)---but for me the bottom line is that we are struggling to meet the needs of those we serve. In the last few years we have seen several tiny-k programs give up their grants due to the fact they simply couldn't make it work with the funds received. I have heard from other programs that they are now being hit with additional regulations that will require more staff in order to complete data requirements--And they don't know how they can reduce services to families in order to cover the additional requirements. I know in Northwest Kansas we count on the support of our lead agency to share staff so we can make the tiny-k program work. If NKESC didn't share staff and coordinate service with our schools (For example: we use one PT to serve both school age children part time funded through the school programs and then use this same person funded to serve the tiny-k children while in the area reducing travel time and expenses)--- no one could afford to do the program!

Clearly Kansas is suffering a state fiscal dilemma and policy makers have an arduous task in determining ways to manage the state's budget. However, funds to support the tiny k program are not only needed to maintain service for our youngest and most vulnerable—but are also one of the wisest investments the state can make for it's future. Report after report documents how money spent in early childhood reduces future state expenditures anywhere from 7 to 14 times per dollar in later needed supports.

Thank you in advance for doing what you can to increase the KDHE budget for this valuable program. And Thank You for the work you do on behalf of Kansas.

PS Please reference the following reports: Early Childhood Investment Yields Big Payoff; Lynch, Robert; Policy Perspective, 2003: 'Why States Can't Afford to Cut Smart Early Childhood Programs;' The PEW Center on the States, National Economic Forum on Early Childhood Investment, January 2010