



To: Chairwoman Williams and members of the House K-12 Education Budget Committee

From: David Jordan, President & CEO, United Methodist Health Ministry Fund

Date: March 13, 2019

RE: HB 2395 & ABC Program

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of including funding for the Attachment Bio-behavioral Catch-up (ABC) Program in HB 2395. Including funding for the ABC program will improve school readiness and student success for vulnerable children living in Kansas. We do not have the expertise and jurisdiction to render an opinion on the balance of the bill.

ABC is a ten-week targeted, manualized program delivered in the home for parents of children birth to two years old who have experienced adversity. Research shows that the toxic stress caused by Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in early childhood has a major impact on the child's overall development—on school readiness and the ability to learn, on physical and mental health, and on other factors including the ability to exercise self-control. These deficits negatively affect a child's success both in the school setting and throughout adult life.

As an intervention to address adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), ABC has been shown to lead to increased parental sensitivity and responsiveness to child needs. Children who participated in ABC as toddlers were shown to have better receptive vocabulary than comparison children who did not participate. Furthermore, children who received ABC showed more normal levels of cortisol and improved executive function, meaning they have improved their ability to regulate behavior and emotion by their preschool years. Science indicates that vulnerable children who have well-developed executive functioning and emotional regulation are able to do well in school despite experiences of adversity. Executive functioning predicts literacy and math scores, and many teachers contend that competence in terms of executive functioning "is more important at school entry than knowledge of letters and numbers."

The ABC program is an evidence-based strategy to address equity issues, which is why we support its inclusion in HB 2395. Programs like ABC position the State to target children vulnerable to risk that, if unaddressed, will increase future K-12 costs. The program supports early identification and intervention to prevent children at risk from becoming students at risk early in their lives so they are better prepared to enter school and equipped for lifelong success.

