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February 18, 2021

To: Chairperson Concannon and members of the Committee:  
From: Trisha Purdon, Executive Director of Montgomery County Action Council  
Re: Written Testimony in Support of HB 2371

Dear Chairperson Concannon and Committee members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 2371, which would remove barriers to the SNAP nutrition assistance program and childcare subsidy program. I am the Director for the Montgomery County Action Council, the Economic Development organization for Montgomery County, KS. We are a proponent of HB 2371 as it will help many families in Southeast Kansas that are struggling to balance work and childcare.

Retaining and growing an available workforce is one of the biggest issues facing businesses in Kansas today. One of the contributions to this tightening workforce market is due to some workers being excluded from the available workforce due to childcare affordability issues. Domestic abuse survivors, in particular, often are excluded from the workforce due to the ability to cover the cost of childcare while working, as the current law creates the potential for them to come into contact with their abuser in order to receive childcare and SNAP benefits. We hear from our community partners in mental health, education, and childcare that this issue frequently keeps single parents from obtaining employment, as they often cannot cover the cost of childcare without these subsidies, after leaving their abuser. This would provide a fix to a serious problem facing many families in Kansas.

In addition, as a County with two community colleges, we often hear that students with children are often not able to complete their Associates degree within the typical 2-year timeframe, due to the need to cover childcare during their education. Removing the requirements for parents pursuing post-secondary education for childcare assistance helps our workforce receive the needed training to get a better paying job to support their families in the long-term. We have amazing educational opportunities, and hundreds of available jobs ready for these graduates, but they need support in order to finish their education so we can continue to grow our workforce and the Kansas economy.

We believe that this bill helps fix gaps in our system that will help many more Kansans achieve better employment, safe and reliable childcare, and healthy lives. Thank you for your consideration of HB 2371. We support this bill and are hopeful for the future of our families in Montgomery County with these changes.

Sincerely,

Trisha Purdon  
Executive Director  
Montgomery County Action Council