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Kansas Action for Children
Verbal Testimony on the KDHE Budget
House Social Services Budget

Chairperson Buehler and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on several key items in the budget for the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE). As the Committee deliberates the budget for KDHE, we encourage members to consider the following items:

- Add \$15.0 million State General Funds (SGF) in FY 2027 to support the increased caseload in the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to ensure that all eligible children have access to health care.
- Add funding from the SGF and KEY Fund and delete \$6.9 million from the Children's Initiatives Fund (CIF) in FY 2027 to fund CIF programs using alternative sources.

The Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)

CHIP was implemented in Kansas on January 1, 1999, and provides health care coverage for low-income children up to the age of 19. The FY 2027 state share for CHIP has increased due to more children being enrolled in the program, a higher utilization of services for enrolled children, and federal changes that result in more children remaining enrolled each month. **We request the Committee add \$15.0 million from the SGF to fund the agency's enhancement request for additional CHIP funds.** This will ensure that children have access to the medical care they need to live a healthy life and prevent future costs associated with untreated health conditions.

The Children's Initiatives Fund

In 1999, Kansas legislators dedicated earnings from the Master Tobacco Settlement (MTS) to an endowment fund called the Kansas Endowment for Youth (KEY). Each year, earnings from the KEY Fund transfer to the CIF to support programs serving our littlest Kansans. Unfortunately, due to sweeps to the SGF, the tobacco earnings have not had time to accrue the expected interest.

Now, with decreasing MTS payments, **the KEY Fund is \$10.6 million short of being able to fund its current slate of programs in FY 2027.** This puts Kansas communities at risk of losing programs that help kids thrive in their earliest years and reduce the need for costly future interventions.

The KDHE budget, as introduced by the Special Committee on State Budget, includes \$6.9 million from the CIF to fund Infant and Toddler Services, the SIDS Network Grant, and tobacco prevention. These three programs are not expected to transition to the Kansas Office of Early Childhood and will remain with KDHE. **We ask the Legislature to add a total of \$5,922,106 from the SGF, add a transfer of \$1,001,960 from the KEY Fund to KDHE, and delete \$6,924,066 from the CIF in FY 2027 to help alleviate the KEY Fund shortfall while still supporting these important programs.**

Infant and Toddler Services. The Infant and Toddler Services Program (ITS) provides early intervention services for children from birth to age 3 who have a disability or a developmental delay. Services are delivered to families in their homes to ensure families have the resources they need to support their child's development. In FY 2025, 11,499 children and their families received these important services.

SIDS Network Grant. The Kansas Infant Death and SIDS (KIDS) Network provides grief support services to parents touched by the tragedy of infant loss and promotes a statewide infrastructure to educate parents and child care providers on safe sleep practices to eradicate preventable infant deaths. In FY 2025, the program reached 12,689 children and 7,599 professionals.

Tobacco Use Prevention. The Tobacco Use Prevention Program aims to prevent children from becoming tobacco users and reduce exposure to second-hand smoke or e-cigarette aerosol. To support current tobacco users who are trying to quit, the program operates the Kansas Tobacco Quitline.

We understand the Legislature's desire to minimize expenditures and identify cuts in the state budget this year. Yet, we believe the best investments of state resources are those made on behalf of children and families. For these reasons, we ask that you prioritize the needs of the youngest Kansans during your budget deliberations, even if it requires additional funding. If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to me at megan@kac.org.

About Kansas Action for Children

Kansas Action for Children is a nonprofit advocacy organization working to make Kansas a place where every child has the opportunity to grow up healthy and thrive. We work across the political spectrum to improve the lives of Kansas children through bipartisan advocacy, partnership, and information-sharing on key issues, including early learning and education, health, and economic security for families.