

# UNITED WE . | Kansas Town Halls



## 2023 PROGRESS REPORT

*This qualitative research report was originally published in November 2022 following the February 2022 Status of Women in Kansas research report that provided a quantitative look at women's economic and civic status in the state.*

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### *Strategic Partner:*



### *Thank you to our Funding Partners:*



Bicknell Family Foundation      Hinkle Law Firm, LLC

### *Thank you to our Community Partners:*

Fort Hays State University  
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*Special thank you to Nicole Alexander Co. for leading  
the Kansas Town Hall listening initiative and report.*

## LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT & CEO

Research is at the root of everything we do at United WE. We believe it is the first step to true, sustainable change. It is critical to identify specific barriers to women's economic development and develop smart, practical solutions to overcome them.

In 2020, we implemented a two-prong approach to state-wide research that drives our advocacy agenda in the Midwest, with the goal of identifying the key issues that are impacting women's economic and civic success, including childcare, entrepreneurship, broadband access, health care, paid family leave, and occupational licensing.

**First, we conduct quantitative research.** We partner with Universities to conduct unbiased data on women across a particular state. The data gives us a clear picture of which issues are most impacting women. These findings are published as Status of Women reports.

**Second, we conduct qualitative research.** We hold town hall meetings across the state as an opportunity for women and allies to share their experiences. These findings are published as Town Hall research reports with next step recommendations to address the barriers women are experiencing.

As a nonpartisan organization, we use this qualitative and quantitative research to educate elected officials, companies and the general public on the ways women are being held back.

The following report is an update on our Missouri and Kansas Town Hall reports. Progress is noted using a stop light approach:

- **Green** - Significant progress made
- **Yellow** - Some progress made, but more work is needed
- **Red** - Little progress made

None of this research would be possible without our dedicated donors listed below. Thank you for investing in research and the future of women in the Midwest and beyond.

Sincerely,



Wendy Doyle,  
President & CEO

UNITED  
WE .



Research

+

Solutions

=

Results

# CHILDCARE



## 2023 UPDATE

This issue has garnered significant media attention and has been the focus of bipartisan legislative efforts. Some important strides have been made, including:

- The legislature passed House Bill 2237, expanding tax benefits for employers who provide child care services. Legislation like this helps support families who've been experiencing barriers to childcare. We hope to see businesses take advantage.
- The Early Childhood Transition Task Force - The task force was set up to explore one proposed solution in particular: a major overhaul of state government administration of child care programs. The task force is expected to develop a plan to implement the governor's reelection campaign promise to consolidate child care programs spread across multiple agencies, elevating them into a new cabinet level agency.
- Governor Kelly and the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF) awarded \$8.1 million in grants to the Kansas Children's Discovery Center in Topeka and the Phillips Fundamental Learning Center in Wichita. These funds are the first round of the available \$18 million in Strengthening People and Revitalizing Kansas (SPARK) Community Capacity Grants, focused on growing educational opportunities for Kansas children and families.

- Governor Laura Kelly and the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund announced funding awards to 52 statewide organizations for the purpose of creating new, sustainable, high-quality licensed child care slots across the state and accelerating capacity-building in support of families, businesses, and economic development. These grants are part of the Child Care Capacity Accelerator grant program, which was designed to advance the rapid development of additional child care slots statewide. The program will provide \$43.6M in grant funding. As of August 2023, the number of childcare slots had grown by 6,848 slots.

However, much more work must be completed on this critical issue if women are going to be able to maximize their potential in the workforce. Additionally, women of color make up the majority of the childcare workforce, making this an issue of equity.

United WE will collaborate with stakeholders to increase awareness of the childcare tax credit. Additionally, the organization will focus on policies that better support the childcare workforce. According to a recent report by Kansas Action for Children, *"child care workers are paid worse than 98% of professions."*

# ELDERCARE



## 2023 UPDATE

Efforts were made to enact the *Protect Vulnerable Adults from Financial Exploitation Act*, which would require the reporting of instances of suspected financial exploitation under certain circumstances, including by a financial advisor.

In the next session, United WE will work with aging policy stakeholders to continue pushing this legislation and others that would benefit women over 65.

# PAID FAMILY LEAVE



## 2023 UPDATE

Important work has taken place throughout Kansas in educating policymakers at every level on how critical paid family leave policies are to unlocking women's economic potential.

United WE will continue working with policymakers on opportunities to establish paid family leave policies and will continue to collaborate with business leaders to ensure our efforts resonate with employers of all sizes.



# ENTREPRENEURSHIP & OCCUPATIONAL LICENSING



## 2023 UPDATE

United WE advocated for creation of the Office of Entrepreneurship within the Kansas Department of Commerce. This same legislation would also establish that 5% of state contracts and certain incentive funding go toward Kansas businesses that have been in operation for less than five years. It would also encourage the elimination of first-year business fees and require the office of entrepreneurship to submit an annual report to the legislature. This legislation is likely to be resurrected next session.

Several occupational licensing reform bills have already been passed in Kansas including:

- **Eyebrow Threading (SB 348)** - SB 348 would exempt eyebrow threading (a process of hair removal) from the practice of cosmetology, reducing the barrier to occupational licensing. On April 11th Governor Kelly signed SB 348, which will take effect on July 1st, 2022.
- **Licensee Electronic Credentials (SB 66)** - SB 66 would require all licensing bodies organized by the State of Kansas to issue a paper-based and verified electronic license, registration, or certification. SB 66 was signed into law by Governor Kelly on April 20th. It will take effect as of July 1st, 2023.
- **Counseling Compact (HB 2288)** - HB 2288 would provide the legislative framework necessary to participate in the counseling compact without amending any section of law related to licensure, regulation, or practice of professional counselors. HB 2288 will take effect as of July 1st, 2023.
- **Adult Care Homes Operations (HB 2125)** - HB 2125 permits Board of Cosmetology and Board of Barbering licensees to operate in adult care homes and long term care units without having to apply for a new salon or clinic location. HB 2125 was approved by Governor Kelly on April 19, 2023.

# HEALTHCARE



## 2023 UPDATE

United WE will continue supporting efforts to create a Maternal Mortality Review Board. Senate Bill 118, from the 2023 session, would expand the Board’s responsibilities to include helping providers/facilities continuity of care, implementation of performance measures, recognize historical trauma related to disparate outcomes, and review of racial/geographic disparities of maternal deaths. No action was taken on SB 118. It is likely to be considered during the 2024 legislative session.

# CIVIC ENGAGEMENT



## 2023 UPDATE

United WE’s Appointments Project® has connected with 2,500 women across the State of Kansas with opportunities to serve on civic boards and commissions.

Additionally, United WE held a joint event with American Public Square on July 11th, 2023 to dive into the issue of incivility in politics and how it can be a barrier for women when they’re contemplating their civic leadership journey.