

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CPO, Springfield Leaders Urge Governor Kehoe to Sign *Missouri Community Child Care Exchange* Funding to Help Child Care Crisis

SPRINGFIELD, Mo., (6/26/2025) – Community leaders in Springfield are joining a statewide call for Missouri Governor Mike Kehoe to sign funding into law to launch a new and innovative cost-sharing program aimed at making child care more affordable. With \$5 million in legislative funding already secured, the program would launch a transformative public-private partnership aimed at tackling Springfield’s growing child care crisis.

Recent data from the Community Partnership of the Ozarks’ 2023 data collection project highlights significant gaps in access to early childhood care across the region. Only 59% of infants and toddlers are currently served by available child care slots, creating a pressing challenge for working families.

“Springfield’s families are facing a dual crisis—child care is both scarce and unaffordable, with some households spending over 25% of their income just to secure care,” said **Amanda Coleman, Vice President of Early Childhood and Family Development at Community Partnership of the Ozarks**. “This innovative model would provide a sustainable solution by equally sharing costs between the state, employers, and families.”

The program would allow local organizations like the Community Partnership of the Ozarks to work with employers and providers to make high-quality care affordable for families who earn too much to qualify for subsidies but still struggle with market rates.

“Businesses across Springfield are seeing parents cut back hours or leave the workforce entirely because of child care challenges,” said **Karen Kunkel, Workforce Development Manager of the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce**. “The child care exchange model is a smart economic strategy that supports our workforce, our families, and our future.”

Springfield leaders note the region has already laid important groundwork through its ongoing child care and early education planning process, positioning the community to swiftly implement the program upon gubernatorial approval.

“Our local coalition is prepared and ready,” said **Carly Walton, Owner of Peapod Learning Center: Peapod Nature Preschool**. “With legislative support secured, we now look to Governor Kehoe to take the final step that will empower Springfield to expand access to affordable, high-quality child care for families across the Ozarks.”

###

ABOUT COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP OF THE OZARKS: *The mission of Community Partnership of the Ozarks is to facilitate and promote the building of resilient children, healthy families, and strong neighborhoods and communities through collaboration, programming and resource development. For more information on the Partnership’s collaborative efforts and programs, visit www.cpozarks.org.*