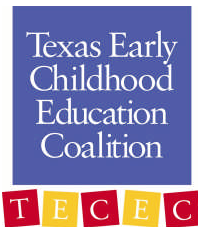


Testimony of:

Kara Johnson  
Executive Director  
Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition  
(TECEC)



Before the:

Senate Health & Human Services Committee

Tuesday, March 17, 2009

Good morning. My name is Kara Johnson and I am the Executive Director of the Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition (TECEC). TECEC represents more than 275 organizations and thousands of members from across the great state of Texas. Our partners include representatives from public schools, Head Start, child care, the business community, higher education, foundations, community based organizations, and more. I would like to begin my remarks by thanking each of you for your leadership and hearing my testimony today.

The purpose of my remarks today is to support Senator Shapiro's bill, Senate Bill 572, "Jacob's Law," relating to transportation safety training requirements for certain child care providers. As you heard today, this legislation would require an owner, operator, or employee of a child care center, group child care home, family home, child-care institution, foster group home, or agency foster group home who transports a child under the care of the facility whose chronological or developmental age is younger than nine years of age to complete at least two hours of annual training on transportation safety.

TECEC is in support of this legislation. In 2006, Texas led the nation with the greatest number of deaths from children being left in a hot vehicle. This issue is so important that it led to the Department of Family and Protective Services launching a public awareness campaign titled "See and Save," where parents, child care providers, and others are reminded that if you cannot see a child, you cannot save a child.

This issue also hits close to home for one of TECEC's Coalition members. One of our members is a woman by the name of Avonda Fox from the Dallas

area whose son Jacob died as a result of being left in a van while in care at a child care center. She is here to tell you her story today. I do not need to tell you that this is a senseless tragedy that could be prevented by adding transportation safety to the list of subject areas to cover on an annual basis.

On behalf of the Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition, thank you, and I am happy to answer any questions.