



March 13, 2024

Adrienne Olejnik, Vice President
Kansas Action for Children
Written-only Proponent Testimony on HB 2811
House Committee on Appropriations

Chairman Waymaster and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide to testify in support of HB 2811, which would establish the Nursery Program for Incarcerated Moms. 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.

We support policies and programs that help parents build strong bonds with their children and set up positive opportunities for families to thrive. An incarcerated parent is an example of a situation that creates an adverse childhood experience (ACE), which can undermine a child's development and ability to cope with life's challenges.¹ A nursery program for incarcerated mothers would help mitigate the weakened attachment and bonding that separation creates for a mother and her infant, thereby reducing the effect of an ACE.

Similar nursery programs in other states have included educational resources and parenting classes for the mothers participating—setting them up for a stronger experience to regain their footing when their incarceration is complete.

A range of benefits are possible. If the program is established, we would hope to see positive impacts like reduced recidivism, fewer children entering foster care who participated in this program, improved health outcomes for both the mother and child, and brighter futures for more Kansas children.

We ask you to support HB 2811 and open up this opportunity to Kansas mothers who find themselves in this difficult situation. If you have any questions about my testimony, please contact me at adrienne@kac.org.

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (June 2023). *Fast Facts: Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences*. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/fastfact.html>