



January 31, 2024

Erin Melton, Economic Security Policy Advisor
Kansas Action for Children
Written-only Proponent Testimony for HB 2581
House Committee on Child Welfare and Foster Care

Chairwoman Concannon and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2581. 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.

This bill would eliminate the requirements that the court order child support to be paid to the Secretary for Children and Families when custody of the child is awarded to the Secretary and that child support payment requests be made in a child-in-need-of-care petition.

Removing these child support order requirements during the process of a child coming into custody of the Secretary will create better outcomes for Kansas children and families who become involved with the child welfare system. Families living on low incomes are disproportionately represented in child welfare cases.¹ For these families, being charged while their children are in care is very likely to increase economic hardship and instability. Financial strain only makes it harder for parents to create the stable, supportive conditions required for reunification.

Current policy does not put the needs of the child first. I urge the Committee to continue making progress in Kansas' child welfare system by removing this harmful and counterproductive requirement. Making it easier for families to gain the economic stability needed to reunify more quickly will improve outcomes for Kansas kids, so I urge you to support HB 2581. Thank you for the opportunity to share our support of HB 2581. If you have any questions, please email me at erin@kac.org.

¹ Azevedo-McCaffrey, Diana (Oct. 13, 2022). *States Should Use New Guidance to Stop Charging Parents for Foster Care, Prioritize Family Reunification*. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/income-security/states-should-use-new-guidance-to-stop-charging-parents-for-foster-care>